



**Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive**  
**DSpace Repository**

---

Theses and Dissertations

1. Thesis and Dissertation Collection, all items

---

1998-06-01

# Conflict and compromise in the southern Philippines : the case of Moro identity

Harber, John D.

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

---

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/8141>

---

This publication is a work of the U.S. Government as defined in Title 17, United States Code, Section 101. Copyright protection is not available for this work in the United States.

*Downloaded from NPS Archive: Calhoun*



Calhoun is the Naval Postgraduate School's public access digital repository for research materials and institutional publications created by the NPS community. Calhoun is named for Professor of Mathematics Guy K. Calhoun, NPS's first appointed -- and published -- scholarly author.

**Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School**  
**411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle**  
**Monterey, California USA 93943**

<http://www.nps.edu/library>

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



**CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE IN THE SOUTHERN  
PHILIPPINES: THE CASE OF MORO IDENTITY**

by

John D. Harber

June 1998

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Mary P. Callahan  
Robert E. Looney

Thesis  
H205215

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

DUDLEY KNOX LIBRARY  
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
MONTEREY CA 93943-5101

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)

2. REPORT DATE  
June 1998

3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED  
Master's Thesis

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  
**CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES: THE CASE OF MORO IDENTITY**

5. FUNDING NUMBERS

6. AUTHOR(S)  
Harber, John D.

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)  
Naval Postgraduate School  
Monterey, CA 93943-5000

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

## 11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT  
Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

## 13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

This thesis examines the ethnic Moro conflict in the southern Philippines. The argument herein is that the centuries old conflict between the Muslim Filipinos and the ruling governments, both colonial and independent, is not caused by religious or ethnic intolerance or difference. Rather, it is predominantly the result of the politicization of the Moro identity first brought upon by the colonial practices of the Spanish and Americans, and ultimately by the independent Philippine government. The analysis suggests that the decentralization policies of the Ramos administration (1992-1998) and the compromise between his administration and the Moro National Liberation Front (the dominant Muslim faction) may have finally resolved the conflict. If lasting peace has in fact been achieved, Muslim regions of the southern islands represent the means whereby the nation will enter the twenty first century as a newly industrialized nation..

14. SUBJECT TERMS  
Philippines, Moro, Mindanao, Marcos, Aquino, Ramos, Ethnicity, Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Misuari.

15. NUMBER OF PAGES  
109

16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT  
Unclassified

18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE  
Unclassified

19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT  
Unclassified

20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT  
UL



**Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.**

**CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES:  
THE CASE OF MORO IDENTITY**

John D. Harber  
Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy  
B.S., Southern Illinois University, 1988

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
June 1998**





## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the ethnic Moro conflict in the southern Philippines. The argument herein is that the conflict between the Muslim Filipinos and the ruling governments, both colonial and independent, is not caused by religious or ethnic intolerance or difference. Rather, it is the result of an historical politicization of Moro identity that, when combined with the centralization processes of President Ferdinand Marcos, ignited a guerilla war that prevented economic growth and social stability. The analysis suggests that the decentralization policies of the Ramos administration (1992-1998) and the compromise between his administration and the Moro National Liberation Front (the dominant Muslim faction) may have finally resolved the conflict. If lasting peace has in fact been achieved, the southern islands will provide key economic and political ingredients to allow the nation to enter the twenty first century as a newly industrialized nation.





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
A.	BACKGROUND.....	1
B.	GENERAL THEORIES OF ETHNIC CONFLICT.....	3
C.	RELEVENCE.....	8
D.	METHODOLOGY.....	10
II.	MINDANAO HISTORY/COLONIZATION.....	15
A.	THE ARRIVAL OF ISLAM IN THE ARCHEPELAGO.....	16
B.	SPANISH COLONIZATION.....	19
	1. Origins of Moro Angst.....	19
	2. The Seeds of Revolution.....	23
C.	U.S. COLONIZATION.....	25
	1. The Philippine-American War.....	26
	2. American Administrative Policies.....	27
	a. Organization of the Christian Provinces.....	31
	b. Organization of the Moro Provinces.....	33
	3. Philippine Independence.....	39
III.	MODERN HISTORY (1963-PRESENT).....	45
A.	THE MARCOS ERA.....	46
B.	THE AQUINO ERA.....	54
C.	THE RAMOS ERA.....	59
	1. Goals of the New Administration.....	60
	2. The Agreement: Peace at Last?.....	63
	3. The Autonomous Government of Mindanao.....	64
IV.	THE IMPLICATIONS OF COMPROMISE.....	67
A.	SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS.....	67
B.	ECONOMIC LINKAGES.....	75
	1. Global Developments.....	75
	2. Mindanao Development.....	78
	3. Regional Cooperation.....	84
V.	FUTURE/CONCLUSIONS.....	91
	SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	93
	INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	95



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This thesis demonstrates that the cause of the Moro conflict in the southern Philippines was ethno-political. The historical record reveals that Spanish colonization established a geographically oriented north-south divide between Muslims and Christians, and the American colonial government further reified that boundary through migrations and land grants to Christians. The historically constructed enmity between the Moros and governing forces erupted into sustained violence in 1972 when the already politicized Moro identity was ignited by the forced centralization policies of President Ferdinand Marcos.

After years of warfare and unwavering Moro calls for independence, the presidential administration of Fidel Ramos (1992-1998) appears to have achieved a lasting peace between the Moros and the central government. Ramos' policies of decentralization and regional autonomy combined with mutual concessions between the government and MNLF resulted in a 1996 peace agreement granting limited autonomy and self rule to the Moro peoples.

The agreement was an outcome of both political and economic processes. It preserves the territorial integrity of the nation while providing areas for economic cooperation and self-government. The peace process and resultant potential for stability have become the key to nationwide economic reform, which Ramos hopes will catapult the country into the new century as a newly industrialized nation. Through decentralization and the strengthening of local autonomy throughout the Philippines,

Ramos has provided an opportunity for sustained economic growth and avenues for conflict resolution through non-violent means. The byproduct of social stability and economic growth is a renewed political and economic status for the nation within Southeast Asia.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The author would like to thank Dr. Patricio Abinales of Ohio University for his time, insight, and advice during this project. Additionally, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Professor Mary Callahan for her guidance and instruction not only during the writing of this thesis, but throughout my enrollment in the National Security Affairs Program.





# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

The U.S. National Security Strategy highlights overseas ethnic conflict as one of the dangers facing our nation. In his 1997 annual report to the President and Congress, Secretary of Defense Cohen stated, "Hostile regimes, instability, and ethnic tensions threaten American interests in key regions."<sup>1</sup> One such zone of tension can be found in the Republic of the Philippines, which has a history of ethnic unrest throughout the post World War II period. Until the presidential administration of Fidel Ramos (1992-1998), ethnic unrest had prevented sustained economic growth, threatened democratic principles, and undermined the diplomatic status of the nation within the region. The longest running conflict was the century-old animosity between Muslim and Christian Filipinos. After a 50-year lull in violence, the conflict reignited into full blown guerilla war in 1972 and continued into the 1990's.

Muslim Filipinos ("Moros")<sup>2</sup> are the dominant minority in Philippine society and represent about five percent of the total national population. They have lived predominantly on the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago for hundreds of years, and never fully recognized rule by any authority outside the Islamic datu system. The Moros fought against rule by Spanish and American colonizers, and ultimately

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997), vii.

<sup>2</sup> "Moro" is a term first coined by the Spanish who thought the indigenous peoples of the southern islands resembled the Moors of North Africa.

against authority of the independent Philippine government. Previous colonial and Filipino administrations have attempted to end Moro unrest by both force and negotiation, but neither were successful. After decades of warfare and unwavering Moro calls for independence, negotiation finally paid off after the 1992 election of President Fidel Ramos. In 1996 the dominant Muslim group, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), signed a peace agreement with the Ramos administration which granted limited autonomy and self rule by the Moro peoples.

The agreement was an outcome of both political and economic developments/processes. It preserves the territorial integrity of the nation while providing meaningful initiatives toward economic cooperation and self-government. The peace process and resultant potential for stability have become the key to economic reform, which Ramos hopes will catapult the country into the new century as a newly industrialized nation. Through decentralization and the strengthening of local autonomy throughout the Philippines, Ramos has provided an opportunity for sustained economic growth and avenues for conflict resolution through non-violent means. The byproduct of social stability and economic growth is a renewed political and economic status for the nation within Southeast Asia.

An understanding of the roots of Moro unrest and the steps which led to the 1996 peace treaty provide a basis for understanding the nature of the Moro conflict. By devoting proper attention to the historical aspects of Moro unrest, one can check any tendencies to seek purely ethno-religious explanations for the centuries of violence. I will demonstrate that the origins of the Moro conflict are not found solely in religion and/or

colonization, but rather in several inter-related factors which led to the politicization of Moro identity.

I will examine the history of Muslim Filipinos within the contextual framework of events that politicized Moro identity and then led to conflict and eventually compromise with the Manila-based governments. Specifically, I look to answer what caused ethnic conflict in the Philippines, and what brought about cessation of this conflict.

In answering my first research question, I will demonstrate that cause of the Moro conflict in the southern Philippines was ethnopolitical. More specifically, government policies of the Spanish and U.S. colonial regimes as well as the post-independence Filipino regimes politicized Moro identity and ignited the potential for ethnic conflict. Spanish colonizers established a geographically oriented north-south divide between Muslims and Christians, and the American colonial government further reified that boundary through migrations and land grants to Christians. After independence the historically-constructed enmity between the Moros and Manila erupted into sustained violence in 1972 when President Ferdinand Marcos tried to centralize control over Mindanao. In answering my second question, I will demonstrate that it was not until the decentralization and autonomy policies of the Ramos administration that peace between the Moros and Manila government was possible.

## **B. GENERAL THEORIES OF ETHNIC CONFLICT**

Donald L. Horowitz points out in his book, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, that the obstacles to a theory of ethnic conflict are formidable, and most current theories are

deficient and "not wholly satisfying."<sup>3</sup> Even an adequate definition of conflict is elusive, although Horowitz cites a Lewis Coser definition as the most suitable description of conflict: "a struggle in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals."<sup>4</sup> Horowitz notes that current ethnic conflict theories point to three categories of causes of ethnic conflict: tradition and modernization, economic interest, and cultural pluralism.<sup>5</sup> An examination of these theories will reveal that although they may explain certain aspects of the Moro conflict, they lack consistency when placed upon the historical framework of the conflict that actually emerged in the Philippines. An examination of current theories follows:

Modernization causes ethnic conflict by placing ethnic tradition on the defensive. Although one may presume that educated minority elites and urban dwellers would move a minority group away from traditional ethnic loyalties, the ethnicity and tradition theory argues that minority elites who worked to protect their cultural traditions were often in the forefront of ethnic conflicts. This is clearly the case of the Philippine Muslim elites, who were concerned that Moro loyalties were being dispersed from family and clan to colonizers and independent administrations. Often, according to this theoretical school, the ethnic conflict is said to stem from earlier lapsed conflicts which are revived to fit contemporary conditions. However, although centuries old animosities existed in the memory of the Moro peoples, this theory cannot account for the 50-year lull in violence

---

<sup>3</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985) 95.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., chap 3 passim.



between American colonization and the independent Marcos administration. Finally, a fundamental assumption of modernization theories is that the minority and majority groups will have convergent aspirations. This is clearly not the case of the Moros, who first requested recognition as a U.S. territory and finally launched a guerilla war for complete autonomy from the Christian north.

A second theory of ethnic conflict is the economic interest, or materialism theory. This theory includes several variants, the first of which sees ethnic conflict as artificial. It is presumed that "belief in the importance of distinct ethnic interests constitutes part of an ideology (in the Marxist sense) that masks class interest and diverts the working class from pursuing their interests."<sup>6</sup> Horowitz cites M.S. Prabhakar who states ethnic conflict amounts to "challenging nonexistent or barely dangerous enemies" and avoiding the "real issues" and the real enemies, namely "the ruling class."<sup>7</sup>

A second version of the materialist theory focuses on ethnic conflict as a function of working-class competition, while a third variant focuses on tensions between middleman minorities and their host societies, each having incompatible goals which ultimately result in conflict. None of the three economic variants clarify the case of the Philippine Muslims. Muslim areas remain economically backward and lag behind development of the Christian north due in large part by choice of the Muslim peoples who viewed attempts at development and education as a Christianization process. Further, the working-class competition and middleman minority theories do not apply in that there

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

has been no mass employment of Muslim minorities, nor have they held a strong position in commerce and trade when compared with Christian Filipinos. Finally, economic theories do not explain the Moro desire for autonomy and legitimate representation that has taken precedence over economic interests in determining their group behavior.

The last of the three main conflict theories, the plural society theory, views the conflict as cultural rather than ethnic because culture is often the divisive line that separates groups. The theory of cultural pluralism emphasizes dissensus and "neglects those institutions and beliefs that are held in common."<sup>8</sup> Horowitz notes that the plural society theory focuses on whole groups and ignores the specific contributions that minority elites make to the ethnic conflict. Again, this theory will prove inadequate, as Muslim elites have often struck deals with colonizers and the independent Philippine government.

As none of the prevailing theories seemed to adequately explain the origins, violence, and cessation of the Moro conflict, I turned to an examination of ethnopolitical causations. According to Ted Robert Gurr, a group is considered a "politicized communal group" if they meet one or both of the following criteria: first, that the group "collectively suffers, or benefits from, systematic discriminatory treatment vis-a-vis other groups in the state."<sup>9</sup> Second, a group is politicized if it was the "focus of political mobilization and action in defense or promotion of its self-defined interest."<sup>10</sup> In the case

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>9</sup> Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993) 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7.

under review in this thesis, Philippine Muslim identity was in fact politicized in each of the three major historical periods: Spanish colonization, U.S. colonization, and finally the independent Philippine government. This explains why ethnicity was potentially conflictual.

Case studies conducted by Tedd Robert Gurr have suggested that western democracies have devised strategies of accommodation that have contributed to substantial decline in most kinds of conflict.<sup>11</sup> These reform strategies include the guarantee of civil and political rights for ethnoclasses, programs to help alleviate their poverty, recognition and resources for minority cultures and languages, and greater autonomy and state subsidies for indigenous peoples and regional nationalists. The resolution of the Moro-government conflict during the Ramos administration shares many of the reform qualities that Gurr attributes to western democracies (and Japan). Thus as Gurr points out, the conflict management strategy of concessions short of full regional autonomy attracted substantial Moro support and undercut many of the more militant supporters of the Moro independence movement.<sup>12</sup>

Alternatives such as full autonomy or formation of a minority state were not possible in the southern Philippine regions, as the dominant population in all but five of the 23 provinces is Christian (due to the migration programs of the Americans and independent Philippine government). Gurr argues that the political cultures of western democracies encourage the "accommodation of contending interests, so that campaigns of

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 303.



minority protest prompt elites to devise and apply strategies of concessions and incorporation like those used to manage other conflicts."<sup>13</sup> Clearly Ramos' methodology for resolution of conflict mirrored those used by western nations, and through reciprocal concessions by both the government and MNLF both sides were in agreement.

### C. RELEVANCE

A 1985 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report stated that within Asia, the Philippines was "viewed as a country so closely bound to the United States by ties of interest and sentiment as to give it a kind of dual identity — half Asian and half American."<sup>14</sup> The end of the Cold War and closure of U.S. bases has not diminished the unique relationship between the Philippines and the United States; rather, the nations have progressed to a more mature relationship based on economic linkages, mutual respect, and democratic principles.

Following the end of the Cold War and the reduction of U.S. military forces in Asia, U.S. military officials began to champion a new policy of "places, not bases." This policy allows for the continued forward presence of U.S. forces through temporary use and/or staging of forces and logistics without a permanent presence of the U.S. military on foreign soil. The Philippines will remain a key place of U.S. national interest within Asia both economically and militarily. U.S. defense commitments remain in the Philippines (Mutual Defense Treaty of 1952), South Korea (Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954), and Japan (Mutual Defense Agreement of 1954). Should any conflict arise in East

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>14</sup> Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Philippines*, report prepared by Dave Holiday, Jim Dykstra, Marvin Ott, and Natalie Bocock, 94<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess., 1985, Committee Print, 3.

or Southeast Asia, the Philippines will certainly be at the front line of any U.S. involvement. If, as Secretary Cohen stated, the United States is to remain engaged in the region, it is in the interest of the U.S. government to continue to promote social stability and economic growth within the Republic of the Philippines.

The Philippines has become a potent economic ally linking the United States with the expanding economies of China, Taiwan, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In a 1992 statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Admiral Charles R. Larson, Commander in Chief, United States Pacific Command stated, "We know that our own security and economic growth are now linked to the political progress and economic growth of others. When democratic values advance and free market ideas flourish, so do we. When democracy retreats and access to markets and resources is closed, our nation suffers."<sup>15</sup> Thus, a prosperous, politically stable Philippines ultimately benefits the United States.

The election of Fidel Ramos has resulted in social stability, economic reform, and adherence to democratic principles. The United States has remained engaged in the Philippines and supported the Ramos reform package through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Through education, humanitarian aid, health assistance, and other such programs, USAID has played an active role in assisting the Philippines toward its goal of become a model Newly Industrialized Country (NIC)

---

<sup>15</sup> Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Implications of the U.S. Withdrawal from Clark and Subic Bases*, Statement by Admiral Charles R. Larson. 05 March 1992.

democracy by the year 2000.<sup>16</sup> USAID has supported the new "U.S.-Philippines partnership for democracy and development" plan which stresses shared commitment to mutual economic interest, democracy, and "common concerns for global issues of environmental degradation, and population."<sup>17</sup>

The Ramos strategy may have some applicability for other nations attempting to deal with ethnic conflicts of their own. The strategy undertaken by Ramos may apply in cases where the minority is willing to concede full autonomy, and the government is willing to decentralize and allow some degree of local political and economic control within the affected region. As Gurr points out, regional autonomy is a less threatening and less costly alternative to civil war and secession. He also notes that officials who are prepared to compromise on the autonomy issue can generally find leadership within the various ethnonationalist movements who are open to compromises.<sup>18</sup>

#### **D. METHODOLOGY**

This thesis focuses on two central questions of Moro identity: What caused the Moro-Manila conflict, and what brought about cessation of the conflict? The argument herein is that precursors to violence were a politicized identity and a forced administrative centralization process. A politicized identity in and of itself would not have resulted in violence, nor would centralization policies alone provided the impetus for sustained violence. However, when the historically constructed enmity combined

---

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development. *Mission in the Philippines*. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.usaid-ph.gov/>, 14 April 1998.

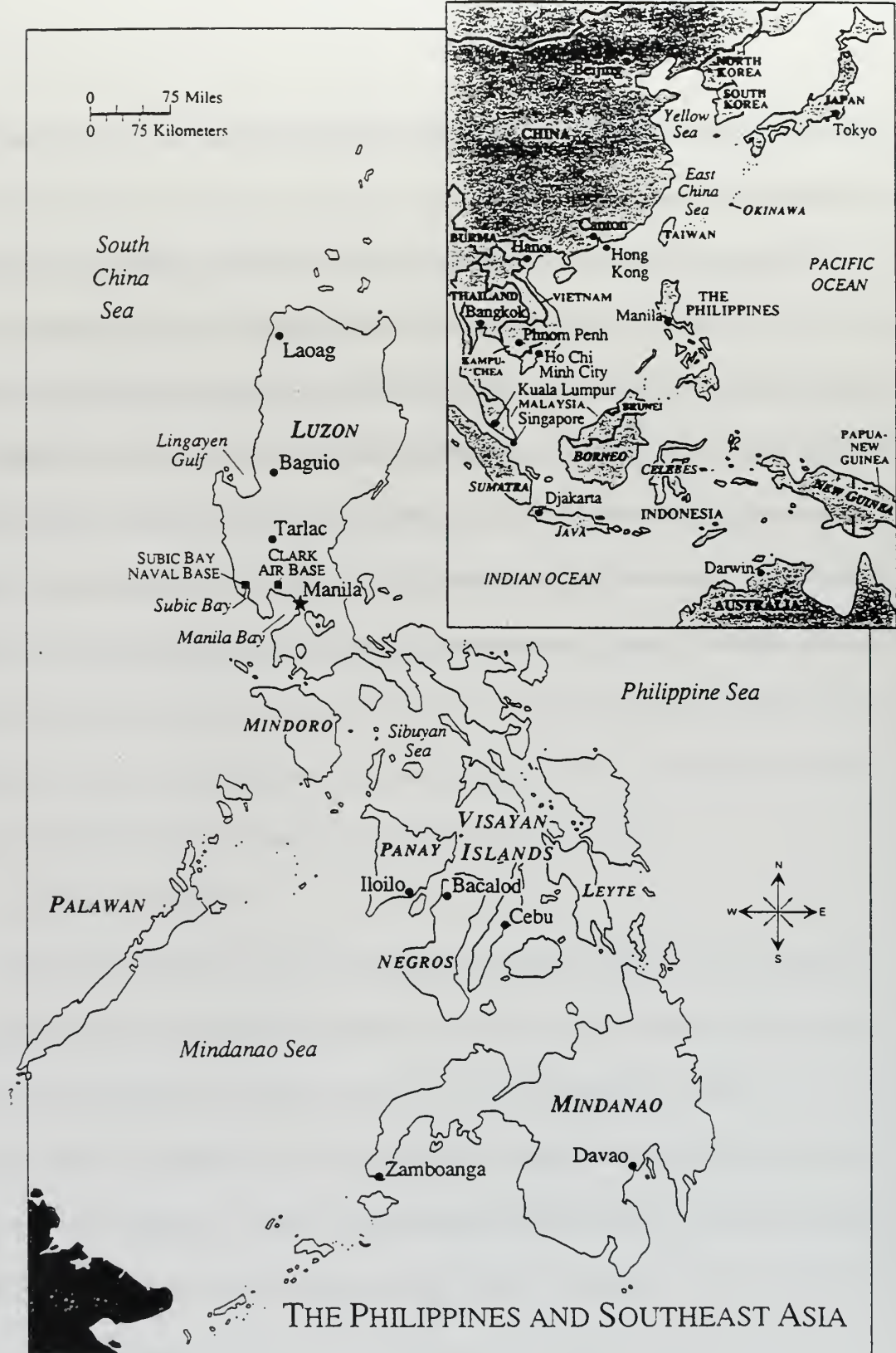
<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Gurr, 298.

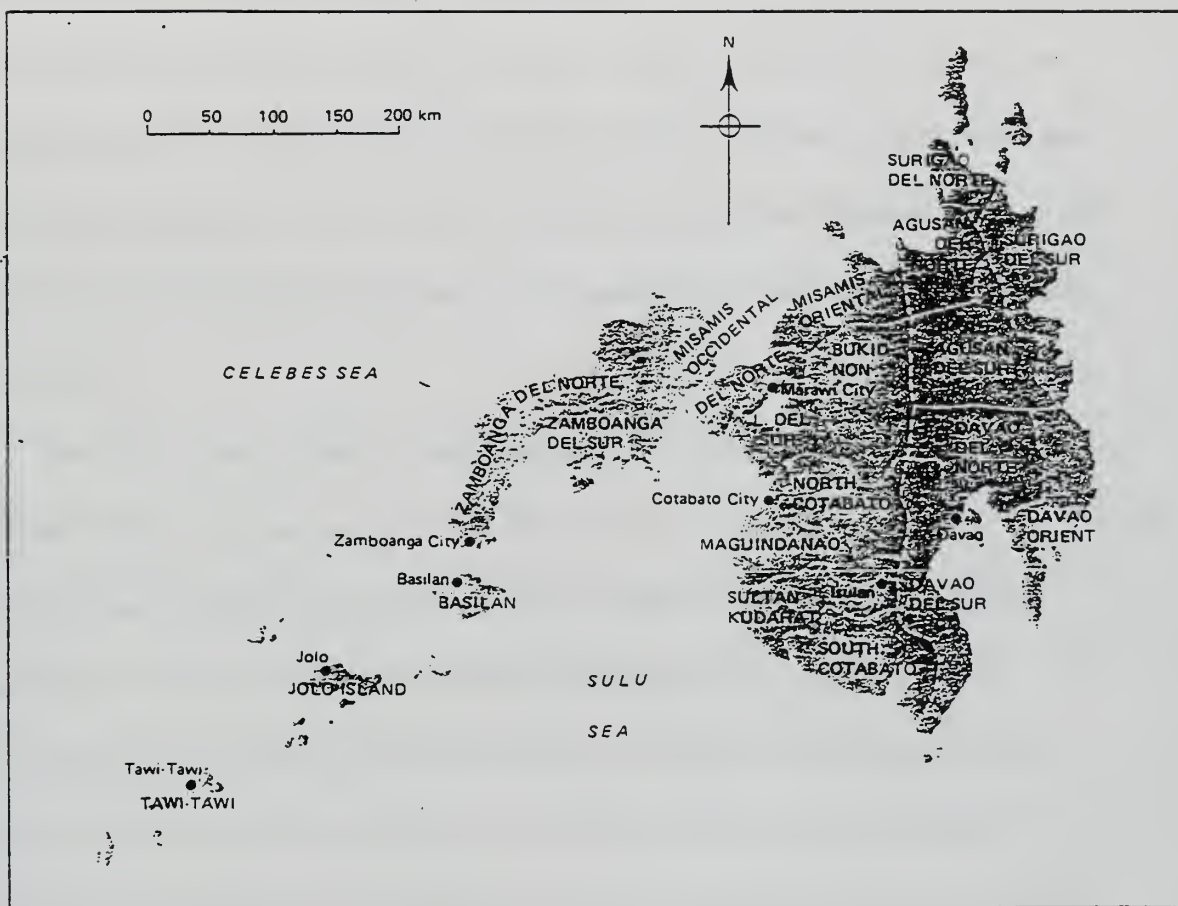
with the forced centralization policies of Ferdinand Marcos, it proved to be a volatile mix, and all out guerrilla warfare erupted.

I define politicized identity as the view of an ethnic group regarding its nature and direction in relation to the ruling majority, including the psychological identification brought upon by forces external to that of the minority. Chapter II of this thesis explains the politicization of Moro identity. Chapter III explains how that politicized identity became violent and was ultimately resolved by the Ramos administration. Chapter IV looks at the implications of the government-Moro compromise in the social, political and economic realms. Chapter V concludes the thesis and looks to the future.





Map 1: The Philippines and Southeast Asia  
(Source: *Waltzing with a Dictator* by Raymond Bonner)



Map 2: Mindanao, showing Regions and Principal Cities  
 (Source: *Revolt in Mindanao* by T.J.S. George)





## II. MINDANAO HISTORY/COLONIZATION

Prior to the coming of Islam to the islands, the indigenous peoples lived as separate, independent tribes. The fierce clan, tribe and village loyalties combined with traditional animist worship resulted in varying degrees of devotion to traditional Islamic beliefs, customs and rituals. After the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish friars converted indigenous peoples in the north to Catholicism and pushed the Moros southward to Mindanao Island and the Sulu archipelago. This process established a geographically oriented north-south divide between Muslims and Christians, which contributed to the formation of a defacto Moro identity.

Despite the years of Moro-Spanish warfare, the Moros were never able to overcome their varying degrees of Islamic devotion, separate tribes, separate ethnolinguistics, and diverse geolocations to unite against their colonizers. Spanish colonization would have two lasting effects in Philippine-Moro history. First, the geographically oriented north-south divide between Muslims and Christians would be firmly established; and second, Spanish colonization resulted in a zero-sum game whereby each gain made by the government and the Church further alienated the Moros. That alienation inadvertently created a non-Christian Moro identity, which would forever effect the psychological identification of the Moro peoples.

The U.S. defeat of Spain in 1898 handed the United States its first overseas colony, and launched the nation into an imperialist role. If the Spanish can be charged

with the creation of a Moro identity, then the Americans reified that boundary through the implementation of a two government system — civilian for the Christians and military for the Muslims. Nonetheless, a common thread of the colonization period and the Manila-based commonwealth rule was the defacto establishment and entrenchment of a politicized communal identity of the Moro peoples.

#### **A. THE ARRIVAL OF ISLAM IN THE ARCHIPELAGO**

During the seventh and eighth centuries, Islam spread from the Middle East to North Africa and across the Indian Ocean. Eventually, Islam made its way through India, through the Strait of Malacca, and into Sumatra and Java. Muslim seafarers from ports in northwest India and the Middle East began to arrive in island Southeast Asia with increased frequency, and by the ninth century, Muslim traders controlled most of the trade routes from Morocco to China. Oppression of Muslims in China during the ninth century led to a migration to the ports of the Malay Peninsula, where they became a conduit for Islamic trade routes, and engaged in shipping and trade within southeast Asia.

During the tenth century, the anti-Muslim political climate in China dissipated and many Muslim merchants from the Malay Peninsula began reestablishing ties with the mainland. The archipelago now known as the Philippines provided a linkage in the trade routes between India and China, and eventually gave rise to Islamic settlements in coastal areas of the Sulu archipelago. Historical evidence shows that Arab ships, or at least ships captained by Arabs, had reached China from the Philippine islands by the tenth century.<sup>19</sup> The first Muslims in the islands found indigenous peoples who were predominantly

---

<sup>19</sup> Peter G Gowing and Robert D. McAmis, *The Muslim Filipinos* (Manila: Solidaridad, 1974) 2.

animists, worshipping stones and other objects. There was no central government and the occupants of the islands were aligned along clan and family ties.

Although it is impossible to precisely date the founding of the first foreign Muslim colony in the islands, graves and tombstones on the southern portion of the Sulu archipelago have been found with dates in the late thirteenth-early fourteenth centuries, leading many to accept this period as the coming of Islam to the islands.<sup>20</sup> Although Muslim contacts had become more frequent throughout Asia, it was not until the thirteenth century that Islam became deeply imbedded in peninsular Malaya, on Java and on Sumatra. Islam was attractive to island leaders as it offered an alternative to the Hindu empire which had permeated the region. Islam offered the island nations equality and an end to the caste system which had been a tenet of Hindu belief.<sup>21</sup> The Javanese Hindu empire of Majapahit collapsed in the late fifteenth century, and Islam was able to firmly establish itself throughout Southeast Asia.<sup>22</sup> Also by the late fifteenth century, Muslim missionaries who accompanied the traders had arrived in the southernmost island of what was eventually to become known as the Philippine archipelago. The missionaries converted many local chiefs, married into powerful local families, and subsequently brought entire clans in to the Muslim fold.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (New York: Random House, 1989), 40.

<sup>22</sup> Alunan C. Glang, *Muslim Secession or Integration?* (Manila: R.P. Garcia, 1969), 6.

<sup>23</sup> Gowing and McAmis, 4.

By 1500 Islam was established throughout Sulu, and with no central government to resist the northward push of the Sultans, Islam easily spread, and reached Manila by 1565. Islam was easily integrated into the islands' societies as the indigenous peoples were divided into barangays (groups based upon kinship), and Muslims brought with them an organized political concept of territorial states ruled by rajas or sultans. The Muslim leaders exercised suzerainty over the village chiefs, and eventually, Arabic language, writing, culture, and government became a way of life in the archipelago.<sup>24</sup>

The degree to which Islam and its tenets were accepted among the peoples was/is quite varied. Filipinos were divided by language, family, and tribal ties, and as such adopted Islam with varying degrees of enthusiasm and devotion. Muslim Filipinos have traditionally lacked any degree of solidarity beyond tribe or clan; even in modern times, thirteen subgroups of Muslim Filipinos can be found in the southern islands. Because the clan and family identities are the strongest loyalties among the Moros, different clans and tribes frequently have gone to war against each other. The Moros have historically been "fiercely proud of their separate identities, and conflict has been endemic for centuries."<sup>25</sup> These tribal and clan loyalties had a two pronged effect: first, Islam in the Philippines did not generate the same cultural and institutional sophistication found in other parts of the Muslim world.<sup>26</sup> Second, the distinct tribal differences and absence of a shared

---

<sup>24</sup> Ronald E. Dolan, ed. *Philippines: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993), 82.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> David Joel Steinberg, *The Philippines A Singular and Plural Place* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1994), 90.



ethnologic or religious identity ultimately would prevent Moro unity of effort against colonizers and the eventual independent government.

## **B. SPANISH COLONIZATION**

In the fourteenth century, European demands for the spices and other products of Southeast Asia and the Catholic Church's push for conversions led to competition for colonies and trading bases in Asia. The Portuguese capture of trading bases in the lower Malay peninsula, Sumatra, and the Spice Islands led King Charles V of Spain to finance the expedition of Ferdinand Magellan in 1518. Magellan sought to find a westward approach to the Far East and promised to bring the King the "fabled wealth of the orient."<sup>27</sup> In 1521 his expedition arrived in the islands that became known as the Philippines. Amid a series of false conversions and trickery, Magellan was killed and only two of his original five ships returned to Spain.

Spain neglected the islands until King Charles' son, Philip, assumed the throne in 1556. Philip was determined to smash Portuguese trade in the Orient, and in 1564 directed Spanish authorities in Mexico to return to the islands as part of a grand strategy to impede Portuguese trade in Asia.

### **1. Origins of Moro Angst**

The expedition of 1564 was led by Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, an aristocrat who would ultimately establish the first permanent Spanish settlement on the island of Cebu in 1565. Over the next six years, Spanish pioneers departed Mexico crept into Philippine society, established colonies and converted natives to Catholicism. In 1570, Spanish

---

<sup>27</sup> Karnow, 32.

frigates led by Martin de Gotti (an army officer) sailed into Manila Bay for meetings with local Muslim rulers. De Gotti signed a covenant with the local Muslim chief, Suleiman, that allowed for a Spanish settlement in exchange for protection from Suleiman's enemies (presumably other Muslim tribes).<sup>28</sup> The agreements broke down following an exchange of gunfire between the Spanish and Muslim artillery batteries. Historical accounts differ on who is to blame for the broken treaties; some blame Spanish aggression, and others claim Muslim provocation.<sup>29</sup> Regardless of where the blame is placed, Spanish troops eventually arrived in the city and burned it to the ground. This incident planted the seeds of Moro angst, which have continued to grow in the modern era. Disputes and conflict continued to rage between the Moros and Spaniards as Catholic conversions increased and the Moros were pushed southward to Mindanao and Sulu.

In 1571 King Philip designated Legazpi as governor of the islands, and he, in turn, named the islands in honor of the King, and officially founded the city of Manila. Sanctioned by the Church, the Spaniards converted all who were willing, while Muslims who refused to convert fled south to Mindanao and Sulu. Although the Spanish claimed suzerainty over the Muslim sultanates of Mindanao and Sulu, they never truly subdued them. Many historians attribute attempts to subjugate the Moros to Spanish Christianization, but strategic and administrative value of Mindanao must not be overlooked. The religious rhetoric was often "inlaid in texts that also enunciate more mercenary objectives related to monopolizing trade, controlling resources, and collecting

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

tribute."<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless, by the early 1600's, Spain had successfully "Christianized" most indigenous peoples, and Islam had become the faith of the minority.

Manila became the center of Spanish control, and as in other Spanish colonies, government officials were inseparably linked to the Catholic Church. In the early years of Spanish rule, often the only Spanish official in rural areas were the local parish priests who established churches and schools, and thereby imbedded the Church's role into the politics of everyday life. The Spanish government built their administrative system of village organization by retaining the village chiefs (*datus*) as village headmen, and co-opting their allegiance by guarantees of privileges and status.<sup>31</sup> In the later years of Spanish rule, key families within the villages combined with an emerging economic elite to form *caciques*, or those who derived power and economic status via landholdings.<sup>32</sup> The *caciques* would grow in power and influence with time, and thus have a everlasting impact on everyday life — even to the modern era.

Village structure was as far as the similarities would go for the Spanish when compared with the methodologies of neighboring colonial powers. The colonial rulers of neighboring states did not come with the aggressive proselytizing as did the Spanish. In other colonial possessions in the region, the focus was not on conversion, but rather on trade; thus, Islam lived on in these societies, and did not suffer repression as it did in the Philippines. Where the friars and priests were the dominant political force in the

---

<sup>30</sup> Thomas M. McKenna, "Appreciating Islam in the Muslim Philippines," in *Islam in the Era of Nation-States*, ed. Robert W. Heffner and Patricia Horvatich (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 45.

<sup>31</sup> Steinberg, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



Philippines, under the trade-oriented regimes in neighboring Spice Islands and Malaya, Islam persisted.<sup>33</sup> As trade was the focal point of neighboring colonizers, the indigenous peoples faced limited objection to their faith, and Islam was gradually woven into a sense of national identity. Even in post-World War II negotiations for Malayan independence, the British were found to nominally favor "Malay political paramountcy, by preserving the authority of the sultans and the attendant structure of *adat* (custom) and *shari'a* (Islamic law)."<sup>34</sup>

The period of Moro resistance to Spanish rule is referred to as the "Moro Wars," which is the general name given to over 300 years of sporadic conflict between Spain and Muslim Mindanao and Sulu.<sup>35</sup> The majority of "wars" were actually clashes of short duration that took place between Spanish troops and individual sultanates, or Moro vs. Moro intersultanate rivalries.<sup>36</sup> The Spanish justified attacks into Muslim territories by blaming the Muslim pirates who intercepted trade from mainland China which was being shipped to Acapulco via the Philippines. Muslim historians view the causes of these wars as their resistance to Spanish attempts to rid Islam from the archipelago. In reality, both were probably true. As trade increased, so did piracy out of the Muslim populated southern islands, and pirates steadily attacked shipping and killed, looted, and enslaved thousands; likewise, the tenacity of the Church in seeking new converts can hardly be

---

<sup>33</sup> Aryn B. Sajoo, *Pluralism in Old Societies and New States* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1994), 32.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>35</sup> Gowing and McAmis, 27.

<sup>36</sup> McKenna, 46.

doubted. Christian Filipinos also suffered during the Moro Wars both at the hands of their colonizers as well as the Muslim pirates. They paid heavy taxes to support expeditions and coastal defenses against marauders, and were "recruited under the system of forced labor to build ships for the colonial navy or to row in the galleys for Spanish forces attacking Muslim strongholds."<sup>37</sup> Additionally Muslim warriors sold thousands of Christian Filipino men, women and children into slavery in the Dutch East Indies.

Despite the years of Moro-Spanish warfare, the Moros were never able to overcome their varying degrees of Islamic devotion, separate tribes, separate ethnolinguistics, and diverse geolocations to unite against their colonizers. Regardless of the cause of the fighting, whether pirates, religion, or broken treaties, Spanish colonization would have two lasting effects in Philippine-Moro history. First, the geographically oriented north-south divide between Muslims and Christians would be firmly established; and second, Spanish colonization resulted in a zero sum game whereby each gain made by the government and the Church further alienated the Moros. That alienation inadvertently created a non-Christian Moro identity, which would forever effect the psychological identification of the Moro peoples.

## **2. The Seeds of Revolution**

With the exception of the Moro Wars, Spanish control of the region remained secure until the 1880's when resentment of Spanish colonialism peaked, and calls for

---

<sup>37</sup> Gowing and McAmis, 28.

independence were inspired by the writings of Filipino nationalist Jose Rizal.<sup>38</sup> Rizal was a sort of Philippine renaissance man who called for reforms of Spanish rule and political freedom for Filipinos. In 1896, at the age of 35, Spanish authorities arrested Rizal and tried him on trumped up charges brought upon by "reactionary Spanish priests and officials."<sup>39</sup> The court found him guilty of treason and he was executed for treason later that year. His execution would spark nationalist feelings of many Filipinos and bring about calls for revolution.

The 1890's witnessed peak in organized Filipino insurgent groups, and by 1897 Philippine nationalists elected Philippine Army General Emilio Aguinaldo as their president. After launching periodic insurgent operations against the Spanish, Aguinaldo reached a truce with Spain and in December 1897 agreed to move his government into exile in Hong Kong. While in Hong Kong, Aguinaldo initiated contacts with the American consul-general Rounceville Wildman, and later with Admiral George Dewey, head of the U.S. Navy's Asiatic Squadron. Aguinaldo sought American support for the Philippine revolution and also pushed for formal Philippine-American alliances in the event of an American war with Spain. The war with Spain did come in 1898, but a written agreement did not, and Aguinaldo was forced to rely upon America's good intentions.

---

<sup>38</sup> Rizal is best known for the novel *Noli Me Tangere* written in 1887. The novel has been called the most influential political novel in the Philippines. Its influence on Filipino political thinking and the arts continues to be enormous.

<sup>39</sup> Karnow, 10.

## C. U.S. COLONIZATION

The United States declared war against Spain on April 21, 1898; nine days later, Admiral Dewey sailed into Manila Bay and destroyed the Spanish fleet at anchor. In June, U.S. Army reinforcements were sent to Dewey for a ground assault on the Spanish garrison at Manila. Also at this time, Aguinaldo returned to the Philippines to set up his government and to assume command of the revolutionary forces attempting to oust the Spanish. Less than two months after the U.S. declaration of war, Aguinaldo declared independence for the Filipino people.

By August 1898, U.S. forces captured Manila, which by default launched the United States into a new global role as colonizers. For the first time American soldiers had fought overseas, and for the first time, America expanded beyond its shores; the former colony itself was to become the colonialists.<sup>40</sup> As Filipinos attempted to establish a government, the Americans reinforced troops and negotiated with the Spanish in Paris for final terms of a peace agreement. It was during this time that the first recorded attempt of the government to strike a deal with the Moro peoples occurred. Aguinaldo proposed that his government be empowered to "negotiate with the Muslims of Sulu and Mindanao to establish national solidarity on the basis of a real federation with absolute respect for their beliefs and traditions."<sup>41</sup> It is unknown how the Muslim leaders responded; however, they generally remained neutral during the period of the Spanish-American war.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>41</sup> Glang, 10.



By December, the Treaty of Paris was signed; it brought peace between Spain and the United States, and allowed purchase of the former colony by the Americans, thus transferring sovereignty over the islands to the United States. Aguinaldo protested the transfer of sovereignty, and denounced the action in a counter-proclamation.

### **1. The Philippine-American War**

In February 1899, less than two months after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, fighting broke out between Filipino and American troops on the outskirts of Manila. The leader of U.S. troops, General Otis, had ordered his troops in garrison to fire upon any intruders.<sup>42</sup> On February 4th, a U.S. Army private fired upon figures in the dark who mocked his challenge to "halt." Two days after the initial fighting, the U.S. Senate voted to retain possession of the islands by ratifying the peace treaty with Spain.

Aguinaldo courted and eventually developed a tenuous relationship with *caciques* and elite Filipinos who had emerged in the later years of Spanish rule. The elites were composed primarily of Chinese *mestizos* (mixed blood), Spaniards born in the Philippines, and Spanish *mestizos*. These elites were known as the *ilustrados*, or enlightened ones; the Aguinaldo-*ilustrados* alliance mobilized a large segment of the population against the United States.

As the war slogged on, the American political machine managed to split the tenuous alliance between the *ilustrados* and the provincial followers of Aguinaldo. The *ilustrados* had become suspicious of Aguinaldo's power following his return the islands,

---

<sup>42</sup> Stuart Creighton Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 61.

and favored a strong legislature as a means of ensuring their control.<sup>43</sup> The *ilustrados* movement began to support the emergence of their own people as genuine alternatives to the republican administration of Aguinaldo. With political maneuvering by the United States, the gap between the two sides widened. An American presidential commission arrived in the islands to appease the political factions and promised that America would include the concerns and views of educated Filipinos in the creation of a new government.<sup>44</sup> The United States emphasized the difference in class, education, and political direction between Aguinaldo and the *ilustrados*. Soon, the Americans and *ilustrados* were joined in a marriage of convenience. Thus by a splitting loyalties and alliances, the United States subdued the independence movement, and captured Aguinaldo in March 1901. The war officially ended on July 4, 1902; however, sporadic skirmishes and battles dragged on for about ten years thereafter.

## **2. American Administrative Policies**

Muslims of Mindanao and Sulu had never accepted Aguinaldo's claim to sovereignty over the entire archipelago; recognizing this, the United States encouraged Moro demands for sovereignty in the southern islands. The United States recognized the uniqueness of the social structure upon which the Moro society was based (i.e., the feudal system of sultanate authority), and thus adopted a policy of indirect rule achieved via direct negotiations. As early as 1899, U.S. Army Brigadier General John C. Bates had negotiated an agreement with the Sultan of Sulu. The Sultan and four of his principle

---

<sup>43</sup> David Joel Steinberg, ed., *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 273.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.



datus agreed to recognize U.S. sovereignty in the Sulu archipelago and also to provide assistance to suppress piracy and apprehend persons charged with crimes against non-Muslims.<sup>45</sup> The willingness of the Sultan to agree to terms of what would become known as the "Bates Treaty" demonstrated the divisiveness among the distinct Moro tribes.

The U.S. government tasked the army occupation force to pacify "dissident elements" and to establish law and order for the eventual integration of the Moros into Philippine society. Army officials assured the Moros that their customs could continue, and U.S. interference would be minimal.<sup>46</sup> In keeping with its policy of indirect rule, the U.S. pledged to respect the dignity and authority of the Sulu Sultanate and promised not to interfere with the practice of Islam. Other stipulations of the Bates Treaty included U.S. guarantees of protection for the Sultan from foreign powers, and payment of the salaries of certain Sulu leaders from government coffers.<sup>47</sup> Although the Bates Treaty demonstrated U.S. willingness to deal with the Moros apart from Christian Filipinos (further reifying a north-south Christian-Muslim boundaries), it must not be overlooked that the treaty continued the historical practice of Muslim-Muslim separation; Muslim tribes freely sacrificed the good of all Muslims in the archipelago for the perceived gain of the individual tribes.

By the end of 1901, U.S. Army forces had begun installing outposts throughout the islands. As the United States began to consolidate its power, it implemented western

---

<sup>45</sup> Domingo, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Miller, 197.

<sup>47</sup> Domingo, 15.

models for education, health and political organization in the Christian north, and assigned military governors to the Moro provinces of Mindanao and Sulu. The American perception of two separate and distinct peoples of the islands (i.e., Christians and tribal non-Christians) enforced the two-government system, and led to military governorship in the south, until such time that the Americans considered the areas were sufficiently pacified to join the "civilianized" territories.<sup>48</sup> American dealings with Moro tribes were influenced by Spanish experiences in the area, as well as neighboring colonial power experience; however, the U.S. was most affected by its own experiences in the "wild west."<sup>49</sup> Senior army officers served as governors of the region, until it was transferred from military to civilian rule in 1914. The military governors set up agricultural colonies, encouraged migration of non-Muslims to the island, and established an organized education policy.<sup>50</sup>

Also in 1901, the United States formed the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes to govern the "minorities." All Non-Christian Filipinos were lumped into the minority classification, and acquired legal status as "protected minorities" or "wards."<sup>51</sup> In 1903 the United States officially established a Moro province and placed the district governor

---

<sup>48</sup> Patricio Abinales, "State Authority and Local Power in Southern Philippines" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1997), 46.

<sup>49</sup> Each of the three military governors (Leonard Wood 1903-1906, Tasker Bliss 1906-1909, and John J. Pershing 1909-1913) had extensive experience in the campaigns against American Indians.

<sup>50</sup> Frederico V Magdalena, *Ethnicity, Identity, and Conflict: The Case of the Philippine Moros* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1996), 18.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

directly charge of a newly established tribal ward system.<sup>52</sup> U.S. policies for the Moro province began to diverge from that of the Bates Treaty, and by 1904 the treaty was abrogated by the former governor general of the Philippines, turned Secretary of War, William Taft. With the abrogation of the Bates Treaty, the United States implemented policies that many Moros viewed as contrary to Islam and their traditional way of life. These policies included the merging of territories, integration of non-Muslim curriculums in schools, and charging of customs duties, and the abolition of slavery. Slavery as an institution played an important part in Moro society as the position of the slave is determined by Koranic law.<sup>53</sup> Elaborate social patterns and the influence of the *datus* were linked in many ways to the number of slaves within his court. The abolition of slavery resulted in uprisings against the Americans led by several chiefs, who had become fearful of restrictions on traditional powers and attempts to usurp their aristocratic authority. After several brutal battles and the deaths of thousands of Muslim warriors in Cotabato, Lanao and Sulu, the Moro sultanates surrendered in 1904. In the end, lack of unity, disparate loyalties and tribal self-interest prevented any effective coordinated resistance to American forces.

Although military might subjugated the Moros, some authors describe the American administration of the Moro province as paternalistic, personalized, and benevolent. These characterizations represent the *vinculum* between rule of the Moros and nostalgia over the lost frontier of the United States. Others find American policies

---

<sup>52</sup> Mckenna, 48.

<sup>53</sup> Melvin Mednick, "Some Problems of Moro History and Political Organization," in *The Muslim Filipinos*, ed. Peter G. Gowing and Robert D. McAmis (Manila: Solidaridad, 1974), 22.

racist, disrespectful, and in parallel with the ill-treatment of American Indians.

Nonetheless, stated U.S. policies were designed to eventually integrate both Moros and Christians into a common Filipino nation, but ultimately reinforced the separate politicization of Moro identity.

*a. Organization of the Christian Provinces*

During the early years of U.S. colonization, questions began to arise in the United States concerning administration policies in the islands. By 1904 the U.S. Bureau of Insular Affairs had received numerous letters of inquiry requesting status reports on U.S. accomplishments in the Philippines to date. In response to the inquiries, Mr. W.L. Pepperman, assistant to the Bureau of Insular affairs compiled a summary of activities in the islands for submission to the Senate chamber by the Secretary of War, W.H. Taft.<sup>54</sup> Included in the compilation was a description of provincial organization which clearly distinguished the separate administration of the Christian and Muslim provinces. The country was divided into 34 Christian provinces, five districts, and a Moro province.

The 34 Christian provinces were governed by a provincial government of five principal officers: governor, treasurer, supervisor, secretary, and fiscal, or prosecuting attorney; the positions of treasurer and supervisor were generally filled by Americans. The governing board was called the "provincial board," and included the governor, treasurer, and supervisor. The prosecuting attorney was the legal advisor of the board and the secretary of the province represented the board's administrative arm.

---

<sup>54</sup> Pepperman's response may be found in the Daniel Murray Pamphlet Collection: Library of Congress, Available HTTP: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/murray:@field \(FL001+04022314+\):@@@SREF](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/murray:@field (FL001+04022314+):@@@SREF), 03 November 1997.



Functions of the provincial government were threefold; to collect taxes (via the provincial treasurer); to construct highways and bridges and public buildings; and to supervise, through the governor and the provincial treasurer, the municipal officers in the discharge of their duties. The governor supervised the duties of municipal officers, and was required to visit towns of the province twice a year and hear any complaints against the municipal officers. The provincial treasurer collected all taxes, which were passed on to the municipal treasurer. The supervisor was generally a civil engineer, who carried out the work required by the provincial board.

The provincial governor was elected biennially by a convention that consisted of counselors of every duly organized municipality in the province. The provincial governor was then confirmed by the Philippine Commission.<sup>55</sup> The positions of treasurer and supervisor were subject to civil-service law, and the positions of secretary and fiscal were filled by appointment made by the Philippine Commission.

Pepperman reported that an election was held in 32 of the 34 Christian provinces during February 1904, and Filipinos had assumed governorships in all the Christian provinces. He further reported that the remaining provincial officers, including clerks of courts, members of boards of tax revision, etc., were filled by 86 Americans and 238 Filipinos.

---

<sup>55</sup> The Philippine Commission was created in March 1900 by President McKinley, and consisted of members of the U.S. legislative branch appointed by the president. The commission was created as an instrument for the exercise of the authority of the President as Commander in Chief to administer the affairs of civil government in territory subject to military occupation. Its purpose as stated in the Pepperman summary was to "continue and perfect the work of organizing and establishing civil government already commenced by the military authorities, subject in all respects to any laws which Congress may hereafter enact." Ibid.



*b. Organization of the Moro Provinces:*

Mindanao was unique not only in that its administrative make-up included a military governorship, but its size and population density also differentiated it from its Christian counterpart. The island is the second largest of the 7,000 or so islands that make up the Philippine archipelago, and yet at the turn of the century was one of the most sparsely populated. The population density of the Moro territories was ten people per square mile while the rest of the Philippines had a ratio of 67 persons per square mile.<sup>56</sup> Given the size and density of the Moro province, U.S. Army control amounted to over half of the land area of the Philippines.

In terms of land, the Moro province itself was four times larger than any other of the provinces, and the districts were huge in comparison with many Christian districts in the north. The Moro province consisted of Mindanao and adjacent islands, and was divided into five districts. The Americans subdivided the districts into two administrative bodies comprised of 14 municipalities (towns with Christian majorities) and 51 tribal wards. The municipalities were organized and administered like the Christian provinces to the north. However, the tribal wards in conjunction with the tribal courts were to assist provincial authorities in ensuring good relations with the Americans, and to make possible a transition to western civilization.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Abinales, 47.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 15.

The executive head of the province was the governor (an American), who had as his assistants the provincial secretary, attorney, engineer, treasurer, and the provincial superintendent of schools. These officers constituted the legislative council for the government. The legislative council was granted a large measure of discretion in dealing with the Moros and in preserving as far as possible, consistent with the act of creating the Moro province, the customs of the Moros, the authority of the *datus*, and a system of justice.<sup>58</sup>

American perceptions of the Moros and motivations for separate administration of them can best be understood by a statement of W.L. Pepperman made in his 1904 report where he described the five Moro provinces as follows:

These provinces are populated, in whole or in part, by harmless and amiable but ignorant and superstitious tribes. It was necessary on the one hand that these inhabitants should be granted protection, and on the other that they should be gradually accustomed to the ways of civilized people, which it is believed they will readily adopt. To this end the general provincial government act has been applied to these provinces in a modified form, under which the governor or chief executive is appointed, as well as the other subordinate officials.<sup>59</sup>

By 1913, American army troops succeeded in crushing the last vestiges of resistance in a final battle with the Moro tribes. The period of the American army administration of the Moro province (1903-1913) is seen as direct American control of Muslim affairs. However, with the establishment of the civilian Department of Mindanao and Sulu under the U.S. Department of the Interior from 1914-1920, administration of the

---

<sup>58</sup> Daniel Murray Pamphlet Collection: Library of Congress, Available HTTP: [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/murray:@field\(F001+04022314+\):@@@REF](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/murray:@field(F001+04022314+):@@@REF), 03 November 1997.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

region can be viewed as a weak attempt to integrate Muslims into the general framework of the colonial government, for inclusion into a unified state.<sup>60</sup>

In December 1913, Frank W. Carpenter became the first civilian governor of the Moro province. Although efforts were made to integrate Muslims into Philippine national life, Carpenter appointed mostly Christians to official posts in the Muslim region.<sup>61</sup> Carpenter and his successors were most influenced by the writings Najeeb M. Saleeby, the first superintendent of schools in the Moro province.<sup>62</sup> A Christian, Saleeby argued for a "variant of indirect rule" for Philippine Muslims, in which religion (i.e., Islam) would be encouraged, and the traditional rulership of the *datus* would be used to unite the Moros under a "process of gradual development."<sup>63</sup> The *datus*, he argued, could lead their peoples along a parallel path of development, akin to policies undertaken in the north, which would lead to an administrative framework that embodied a singular sense of Filipino nationhood. The Americans reasoned that if the Moros could be incorporated into a single colonial administrative framework, the resultant stability and integration would reap economic gains, for Mindanao offered vast unexploited natural resources. Through legislation and resettlement, the nation could exploit natural resources, increase agricultural production, eliminate tenancy, and reform the society.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Cesar A. Majul and R. Santos Cuyugan, *Trends in ethnic group relations in Asia and Oceania, Minorities in the Philippines: The Muslims* (London, UNESCO, 1979), 181.

<sup>61</sup> Domingo, 17.

<sup>62</sup> See discussion of Saleeby's views in McKenna, 50.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>64</sup> Domingo, 18.

By 1915, Muslim datus accepted American sovereignty through abdication of their political power. In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson signed into effect the Jones Law, which was to accelerate the "Filipinization" of Moroland.<sup>65</sup> It also empowered the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes, making it the sole instrument for integrating the minorities into the Filipino mainstream.<sup>66</sup> By encouraging migration to the south, the Americans perceived that Christian Filipinos would provide a stable, unified government, and through this, that the Moros would accept an agricultural way of life. The Moros, however, perceived that "Filipinization" meant "Christianization" and with the exception of several influential datus, remained leery of active participation in politics and development programs. Despite the American goal of cohesive integration of both societies, only a few influential datus took an active role in development projects.

American authorities adopted many recommendations of Saleeby, including a hands-off policy toward Islam. The Protestant brand of Christianity which the Americans brought to Moroland was not used in the pacification effort, unlike the Catholicism of Spain. In fact, the tolerance of the Islamic way of life and a perceived American irreverence toward "Spanish Christianity" (i.e., Catholicism) weighed heavily in favor of American administrative policies in the eyes of the Moros. U.S. policies may have prevented to some degree any unification of the Moros behind an Islamic rallying point due to their tolerance of Islam. The separate and distinct beliefs between the two colonizing powers were demonstrated as some U.S. Army troops went as far as to camp

---

<sup>65</sup> Dennis Bryce Fowler, "The Moro Problem: An Historical Perspective" (M.A. Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1985), 53.

<sup>66</sup> Magdalena, 17.



in Catholic Cathedrals.<sup>67</sup> This lack of linkage between colonization and conversion was much less disruptive for the Moros and made pacification efforts through establishment of U.S. military rule much more successful. Also weighing heavily in the favor of the Americans was the completion of visible, beneficial infrastructure projects such as roads, wharves, telegraph lines, schools, hospitals, sanitation, and improvements in agricultural techniques. Thus the Americans further opened Mindanao to trade, yet all the while it remained a unique, separate region, with its peoples "protected" by the Americans from potential conflict between themselves and the Catholics in the north. This "protection" and separate administration ultimately compounded Moro isolation and left them outside the mainstream of education and economic advancements occurring in the north.

By 1917, with the help of the local elite, the Americans had set up seven agricultural colonies in Moroland for Muslims and Christians alike. The attempted integration has been described by some as the first ever social engineering project as the Americans attempted to unify mutually suspicious Christian and Muslim Filipinos.

Subjugation of the Moros and development of natural resources and infrastructure characterized the period of American governorship. This changed as the Americans relinquished control of the region to the Manila-based Filipino government during the 1920's. The Moros witnessed *deja vu* as Catholic Filipinos, whom they perceived as former Spanish collaborators, gained administrative control of the southern regions. Control of Moroland came under the supervision of the Philippine legislature via the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes within the Department of the Interior. The advent

---

<sup>67</sup> Abinales, 53.



of Catholic Filipino control brought the first concrete attempts at a unified Moro stand against forced integration. In 1921, 57 prominent leaders from Sulu signed a petition that declared, "It is the desire of the people of Sulu to be made a permanent American territory."<sup>68</sup> In 1924, several Muslim chiefs, claiming to speak for nearly half-a-million residents of Sulu and Mindanao, attempted to block Philippine independence by petitioning authorities in Manila and Washington to regard Muslims as a separate and different people and allow them to be governed separately from the rest of the islands. The culmination of this effort was the "Declaration of Rights and Purposes" which Muslim chieftains sent to the US Congress. In it, the Muslims asked that the south be retained under American control until they could be given separate independence.<sup>69</sup> The petitioners accused the northern Filipinos of inadequate representation for Muslims in government service; forced assimilation of Muslim peoples by Christian Filipinos; mistreatment of Muslims; and belittling of Muslim culture - accusations which would be repeated time and time again throughout the twentieth century Philippines.<sup>70</sup> The Americans did not act upon the Muslim plea for suzerainty, for, by this time they had established a rapport with the Christian Filipinos, seeing them as the "real Filipinos."<sup>71</sup> Christian Filipinos readily accepted the American school system, administrative set-up,

---

<sup>68</sup> Fowler, 54.

<sup>69</sup> T.J.S. George, *Revolt in Mindanao: The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics* (Malaysia: Oxford University Press, 1980), 66.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 68.

and business relations. Thus, Moroland was slipped further from American concern and was left to the control of the Philippine legislature.

When comparing the responses to Spanish and American policies in the Philippines, the common thread of Moro history shows that lack of unity, varying degrees of dedication to Islam, and divisive tribal loyalties remained. The Moros historically had associated their identity with tribe first, then as Muslims, but never as "Filipino."

Through land and sea battles, and attempts at integration into the governmental framework, the Muslims of Mindanao remained a complex array of differing loyalties. If the Spanish can be charged with the creation of a Moro identity, then the Americans reified that boundary; first by their racist preconception of the Moros, and ultimately by the implementation of a two government system. Nonetheless, a common thread of the colonization period and the Manila-based commonwealth rule was the defacto establishment and entrenchment of a politicized communal identity of the Moro peoples. Unfortunately for the Moros, the communal identity was not yet strong enough to overcome the unique regional identities and tribal loyalties held by each ethno-linguistic group.

### **3. Philippine Independence**

As non-Muslim Filipinos settled in the southern lands, and calls for independence of the archipelago became louder, the Moro peoples became even more divided between those wishing to remain under U.S. governance (and desire to eventually become annexed

by the United States) and others calling for the Moro peoples to join non-Muslim Filipinos in the push for early independence.<sup>72</sup>

In 1916 President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Law into effect which stated the United States was determined to relinquish sovereignty over the Philippines as soon as a stable government was established. From the passage of the Jones Law until 1934, Filipino activists and American lawmakers negotiated independence through a number of U.S. presidential administrations. Finally, in 1934, the U.S. Congress passed the Philippine Independence Act which provided for a ten-year commonwealth period prior to complete sovereignty. In 1935, the Philippines became a self-governing commonwealth by electing Manuel Quezon as their first president. Quezon and his Nacionalista Party dominated Philippine nationalism until the outbreak of World War II. Quezon antagonized the Moros by his encouragement of Christian Filipino migration to the southern islands. Under U.S. colonial rule the migration had been justified in terms of developing the island's natural resources; however, under Quezon, the rationale shifted to a Christian "improvement" process.<sup>73</sup> From 1917 to 1939, 46,683 persons migrated from northern and central Philippines to Mindanao.<sup>74</sup> In 1939, the National Land Settlement Administration (NLSA) was created by Commonwealth Act No. 441 in 1939. This act was used to allocate Mindanao land to Christian military trainees so they could

---

<sup>72</sup> Magdalena, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 18.

own farms upon completion of their training. By the time the NLSA was abolished in 1950, an additional 8,300 families had migrated from the north.<sup>75</sup>

Other than the continued southward migration, the Commonwealth Government mainly ignored the southern islands. It is unclear where the fault may be placed for this inactivity, whether with the government or the Muslim leadership. Certainly the Manila-based government had become preoccupied with the transition to independence and an uncertainty over Japan's intentions in the region. Also, political disputes between the elites diverted the eyes of Manila from the south. Even during the World War II occupation by the Japanese, the Moros were left much to themselves. In fact, Filipino stories of Moro savagery may have influenced the Japanese to leave well enough alone. Ten months after the Japanese surrender, on July 4, 1946, the Philippines gained independence from the United States under provisions of the McDuffie-Tyding's Act of 1934. The "official" American colonial era had witnessed sustained development in agriculture, commerce and trade. Transportation and communications had been modernized and an American system of education, literature, and language had been implemented.

Following independence, the Manila government accelerated the resettlement program, and tens of thousands of Christians moved to Mindanao. By the early 1950's the resettlement plan included thousands of Hukbalahap communist rebels who had been offered land and settlements on Mindanao in exchange for surrender and amnesty. Magdalena argues that as the Moros perceived their status was eroding due to the

---

<sup>75</sup> B.R Rodil, *The Lumad and Moro of Mindanao* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1992) 12.



Christian bias of the central government, conflicts occurred more frequently as settlers and tribes fought over property issues. Land issues have been the single most important source of Muslim concern.<sup>76</sup> George attributes the economic exploitation of Mindanao as the single most important factor behind Muslim unrest. The land development and mineral exploration led to trespassing on some of the most sensitive traditions of local Muslims.<sup>77</sup>

The Moros did not initially challenge U.S. homesteading and land distribution policies due to the availability of excess land. However, as Christian migration continued through the commonwealth period, land ownership became more difficult to obtain, and would become a central grievance of the Moros following independence. Although disproportionate land distribution began with U.S. colonization, many Muslims leaders had negotiated land deals with both the Spanish and the Americans in order to preserve their sphere of influence. Thus, the blame for the "backwardness" or poverty of the Moros cannot be placed solely at the feet of the colonizers.

Colonial aggression was a major factor of Moro angst, but the lasting effect was the politicization of Moro identity as a separate people. Magdalena indirectly supports this supposition by citing a government study done in 1955 which attributed Muslim rebellions to feelings of alienation, i.e., they did not feel part of the nation as a whole. Based upon the historical record, Muslim grievances over the distribution of land and the lack of a political voice were outcomes of the colonial era politicization and polarization

---

<sup>76</sup> Magdalena, 27.

<sup>77</sup> George, 105, 107.



of the Moro peoples. Nonetheless, the displacement of Muslim occupants of tribal lands and a Filipino version of internal colonization cemented the distinction of a separate Moro identity, independent from that of Christian Filipinos. George notes that the southward migration was a case of "two incompatible socio-legal systems clashing. The local people and the settlers were not only ignorant of each other's culture; their mutual attitudes had been poisoned by the fears and hatreds implanted in their minds by colonial masters."<sup>78</sup> These feelings would later erupt into violence as the government of Ferdinand Marcos would effectively centralize his rule through use of the Philippine Armed Forces (AFP) and the local constabulary.

Recognizing the long-running Moro resistance to the central government, the newly independent Philippine government implemented several education programs in the 1950's and 1960's to assist in the development and integration of the Moros. For example, Manila established the Commission on National Integration, Mindanao State University, and the Presidential Assistant for National Minorities.<sup>79</sup> Despite the education programs, the Moros generally believed them to represent a secularizing threat to their children, or even worse, a vehicle for instilling Christian values. Gowing points out that in the minds of Christian Filipinos, consciously or unconsciously, "integration" meant "assimilation," which was a "thing dreaded by Muslim Filipinos."<sup>80</sup> Thus, Moro

---

<sup>78</sup> George, 119.

<sup>79</sup> Magdalena, 20.

<sup>80</sup> Gowing, 290.

literacy rates fell to well below those of Christian Filipinos, to the point at which some scholars believe they are fifty years behind their fellow citizens.<sup>81</sup>

World War II had a particular lasting effect on Philippine society that is often overlooked. Steinberg argues that it "spawned a totally armed society, and the readiness to resort to force has been a disturbing feature of post-independence Philippine life."<sup>82</sup> Elites, businessmen, politicians and provincial governors all decided they needed more protection against banditry and dissidence, and private armies began to grow exponentially.<sup>83</sup> This effect would be felt particularly in Mindanao as private armies and armed gangs would form along ethno-religious lines during the 1970's.

Christian immigration continued through the 1960's and 1970's. Rapid development, political violence, land and family disputes all combined for increased violence and lawlessness in the region. The violence paralleled a growth in worldwide Arab nationalism, which in turn fueled a Muslim revival in the southern islands. Pakistan and Indonesia had gained independence, and oil from Islamic nations began to rise in importance. Libya, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and other Muslim states began supporting Filipino Muslims, and a guerrilla war was soon on the horizon.

---

<sup>81</sup> Magdalena, 20.

<sup>82</sup> Steinberg, 58.

<sup>83</sup> Charles C. McDougald, *The Marcos File* (San Francisco: San Francisco Publishers, 1987), 113.

### III. MODERN HISTORY (1963-PRESENT)

This chapter focuses on how the Muslim-Christian conflict turned violent, and how the policies of Fidel Ramos succeeded in ending that violence. Ultimately, the centralization policies of President Ferdinand Marcos were the spark that ignited all out civil war between the Moros and the Philippine government. Marcos' attempt to gain control over Mindanao affairs and resources forced Muslim leaders to unite against these incursions. Later, the Muslim community splintered as the disparate and diverse ideologies surfaced among the Muslim leadership. The dominant Muslim group became the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and was led by a former political science professor at the University of the Philippines, Nur Misuari. Misuari and the Marcos administration negotiated a peace agreement upon which all future agreements would be based. However, because Marcos implemented the agreement in accordance with his own interpretations of its provisions, the agreement did not lead to lasting peace.

The "people power" movement of 1986 ousted Marcos from office and led to the presidency of Corazon Aquino until the 1992 election of Fidel Ramos. Ramos recognized that social stability was the key to economic development of the nation, and immediately upon assumption of office set out to seal agreements with rebel groups. Ramos effectively would reverse the centralization policies of Marcos and allow for increased autonomy and devolution of political and economic power to provincial and

regional levels. Only through this process of decentralization was a more enduring peace agreement negotiated.

#### **A. THE MARCOS ERA**

In 1963, Ferdinand Marcos, a charismatic three-term congressman was elected president of the Senate. In the national presidential elections of 1965, he won a decisive victory over incumbent president Diosdado Macapagal. Early into his presidency, clues went undetected that he would become the most corrupt leader the islands had ever seen. Within a year, Marcos set the tone for his social policies by preventing the ratification of the U.N.-sponsored International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. By 1968, Marcos had opened four bank accounts at the Swiss Credit Bank in Zurich, setting the stage for holdings disputes that continue to the present day.

Also in 1968, news broke that AFP trainers had killed at least 28 Muslim military recruits during a mutiny at a secret training camp on the island of Corregidor. The Muslim Filipinos presumably were being trained by the AFP as a secret army to invade the nearby Malaysian state of Sabah.<sup>84</sup> As word of the killings spread, Muslims throughout the world were outraged. Any semblance of a balance of power between state and social forces was lost as the government lost credibility and control in Mindanao, and social forces gained power. Many Muslims perceived that the AFP was carrying out a genocide policy and that the government had begun an attempt to liquidate Islam.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Territorial disputes had arisen between the Sultan of Sulu and the government of Malaysia over rights to the island following the formation of the state of Malaysia in July 1963.

<sup>85</sup> Magdlaena, 28.



One of the significant effects of the Corregidor killings was the formation of the Muslim Independence Movement (MIM). This movement served as a common rallying point with the stated goal of the formation of "Minsupala," a separate state for Muslims to be comprised of territories in Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan. Despite calls for a separate state, leaders of the MIM began to realize that status as a separate state would not be granted due to the strength of Philippine nationalism, and the dominate religion in the southern islands had now become Christian. Christian migration to Mindanao had by now limited Muslim majorities in only five of 22 southern provinces.<sup>86</sup> (The Philippine Muslim population was generally limited to Sulu and southern Mindanao. The population of the Philippines is about 75.5 million of which 83% are Roman Catholic and 5% Muslim.)<sup>87</sup>

Out of the Corregidor affair arose important Filipino Muslim leadership. The killings sowed the seeds of revolution in the minds of many, including Nur Misuari, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines. By 1972, Misuari had become leader of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), an organization that had formed in 1968 with the stated objective of obtaining a separate state for Muslims. As with the MIM, a separate state was the bargaining point from which to give way, for ultimately, the MNLF would settle for increased autonomy.

---

<sup>86</sup> The five provinces that have majority Muslim populations are Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao and Basilan; Basilan has opted not to join the ARMM.

<sup>87</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Philippines" *The World Fact Book*, 1996. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/nsolo/factbook/rp.htm#People>, 06 September 1997.



Misuari launched his struggle in defense of the Moros by running for a seat in the 1970 legislature which was drafting a new Philippine constitution; he lost in a rigged election (1970 also began the second term for Marcos). By this time, Mindanao had become rife with gang warfare as private Christian and Moro armies killed, kidnapped and tortured one another. Armed gangs roamed throughout Mindanao and even attacked villages of the same ethnicity or religion if the politics of the day dictated so. Politicians initially deployed armed gangs to ensure political power was maintained by the Christians; however, all out warfare erupted and further institutionalized Moro-Christian hostilities.<sup>88</sup>

Parallel to the gang warfare in Mindanao, the scene at the national level was even more chaotic. National elections were due in November 1972, and Manila was in a virtual state of war.<sup>89</sup> Bombings and sabotage spread panic, while talk of revolution and death squads was commonplace. Fear swept the capital city as the government claimed Maoists under the leadership of the communist New People's Army (NPA) had infiltrated metro Manila.<sup>90</sup> In the south, Marcos ordered the MIM to be disbanded and sent the AFP to enforce his declarations. Arrival of AFP troops led to increased conflict, closure of public facilities, economic downturn, and refugee flows out of the south. Law and order became non-existent, and the country came to resemble an Asian version of Dodge City.

---

<sup>88</sup> George, 152.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

On September 21, 1972, facing national and regional turmoil, Marcos declared martial law. Martial law transformed the decentralized, weak state into one of militarized, authoritarian rule. Marcos deployed troops and police forces throughout outlying areas to enforce his dictates - one of which was the confiscation of guns. When government forces attempted to confiscate weapons in the southern regions, Mindanao erupted into a bloody civil war. Because the right to bear arms is sanctioned by the Koran and is therefore considered a sacred right, Muslims refused to give up their weapons.<sup>91</sup> Misuari quit his job teaching political science at the University of the Philippines and used foreign financing to lead the MNLF into a guerrilla war, vowing to create an independent homeland for his Moro peoples.<sup>92</sup> Misuari later traveled abroad for military training, ultimately spending time in exile in Libya.<sup>93</sup> Foreign supporters of the Moro cause channeled weapons to the MNLF and its military wing, the Bangsa Moro Army (BMA) via the neighboring Malaysian state of Sabah.<sup>94</sup>

While continuing to use force in attempts to quell Moro resistance, Marcos played on the historic tribal and regional differences of Muslim communities. Muslim society had remained pluralistic, and the historical ethno-cultural differences again prevented unity of effort much as it had in the past. Having learned his military history well,

---

<sup>91</sup> Claude A. Buss, *Cory Aquino and the People of the Philippines* (Stanford: The Stanford Alumni Association, 1987) 109.

<sup>92</sup> Richard Savill, "Filipino Muslims Win Autonomy." *The Daily Telegraph* 20 August 1996. Online. Softline Information Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: world. File: allwld. 01 May 1997.

<sup>93</sup> Leifer, 160.

<sup>94</sup> On 16 September 1963, Britain transferred sovereignty over the colony of North Borneo (Sabah) to the new Federation of Malaysia, which has since been disputed by the Philippines.

Marcos played upon the historical differences of the Muslim tribes and used his own version of divide-and-rule to ensure unity of effort would not be achieved. Marcos used bribes of money and political appointments to reel-in support of many influential Muslim elites. The loyalties to Marcos ran deep, and one influential Muslim leader, Mohamad Ali Dimaporo, went as far as to produce false "witnesses" that claimed that the massacre on Corregidor never occurred.<sup>95</sup>

The Muslim secessionist conflict peaked in 1974, with membership of 50,000 to 60,000 personnel. Dr. Patricio Abinales has stated that the MNLF, unlike the communist party of the Philippines, "was at best a conditional unity of different Muslim language groups as well as different factions within the general Muslim community."<sup>96</sup> Abinales further stated that the degree of support for the MNLF was often dependent upon which ethnolinguistic group one was associated with, or to which family one was related. Historical disunity again played a role for the Muslim community as membership within the secessionist movement splintered into groups of locally-educated youth, and foreign-trained and-educated Islamic radicals. The disparate and diverse membership in the movement led to an unclear ideology, and ultimately stunted any growth of Moro unity in future dealings with the government. This disunity also severed commonality of cause within the MNLF as diverging ideology and objectives would lead to an eventual splintering of the group. More radical elements later leaned toward the fundamental

---

<sup>95</sup> G. Carter Bentley, "Mohamad Ali Dimaporo: A Modern Maranao Datu," in *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines* ed. Alfred W. McCoy (Madison, Wisconsin: Center for Southeast Asian Studies University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993), 251.

<sup>96</sup> Dr. Patricio Abinales (abinales@oak.cats.ohiou.edu), "Mindanao" E-mail to John Harber (jdharber@nps.navy.mil), 11 February 1998.

Islamic line, while the more secular MNLF made concessions and compromised with the government.

In order to gain resources for its secessionist war, the MNLF successfully appealed for training, weapons and funding from wealthy Islamic states for its fight against the government. In April 1974, the MNLF established a central committee in Libya, which had become one of the principle bankrollers of the group. The committee drafted a manifesto calling for political independence for the islands of Mindanao, Sulu, Palawan, Basilan and Tawi Tawi. Through the political savvy of Marcos (and some persuasion by Indonesia, which Marcos had courted), conferees at the 1974 Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC)<sup>97</sup> in Kuala Lumpur voted that negotiations vice secession was the answer to the Moro problem. Some Muslim groups claimed a governmental campaign of genocide was being carried out, but Marcos successfully convinced the majority of OIC members that his policy was one of economic development for the advancement of the Moro peoples.

The financial drain on the economy forced Marcos to negotiate and at least give an appearance of good will, for from 1973 to 1975, he had deployed 75-80 percent of the AFP's combat strength to Mindanao and Sulu.<sup>98</sup> Warfare between the AFP and the

---

<sup>97</sup> The Organization of the Islamic Conference is a 56-member organization, established in September 1969 during the First Conference of Head of Islamic States and Governments, in Rabat, Morocco. It represents more than 1.3 billion people, and its headquarters is in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The main objectives of the Organization are to "strengthen Islamic solidarity and cooperation in economic, social, cultural and knowledge among its members, to strengthen the Islamic Ummah in striving attain their national pride, freedom and rights, and to assist establishment of world peace and security based on justice." OIC members include Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey.

<sup>98</sup> Ruben G Domingo, "The Muslim Secessionist Movement in the Philippines: Issues and Prospects" (M.A. Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1995), 53.



Bangsa Moro Army had resulted in approximately 60,000 deaths and the displacement of over one million persons, nearly a quarter of which had sought refuge in the Malaysian state of Sabah. In July 1975, the OIC formally recognized the MNLF and granted it observer status. Facing newfound international support for the MNLF, the increasing costs of the rebellion, and the possibility of sanctions by its Middle Eastern oil suppliers, Marcos pushed into high gear negotiations to weaken foreign support for the Muslim rebels. His efforts were aided when the rebellion was temporarily curbed by an August 1976 earthquake and tidal wave that hit Mindanao and killed 8,000 persons.

The lull in violence provided an opportunity for Marcos to push for outside assistance to solve the rebellion. It was no secret that primary financing for the MNLF was coming from Libya and Malaysia, and as such, in 1976, Marcos sent First Lady Imelda Marcos to Libya to meet with Mohamar Qaddafi to request diplomatic assistance in ending the insurgency. Qaddafi agreed, and Mrs. Marcos returned to the Philippines with what has become known as the Tripoli Agreement. The agreement was brokered by the OIC, and signed by the MNLF, the Philippine Government, and the OIC. The agreement promised autonomy for 13 provinces on Mindanao, Sulu and Palawan islands following a "constitutional process." History is not kind to the Marcos', but it cannot be ignored that the principles of this agreement, brokered through the negotiation of Imelda Marcos, would provide the foundation upon which future government-Moro negotiations and compromises would be based.



Scholar Claude Buss summed up the basic provisions of the Tripoli Agreement:<sup>99</sup>

The autonomy was to include Muslim courts, a legislative assembly and executive council, an autonomous administrative system, special regional security forces, and representation in the central government; control over education, finance, and the economic system; and the right to a reasonable percentage of the revenues of mines and minerals. The Manila-based government was to maintain responsibility for foreign policy and national defense. The role of the MNLF forces and the AFP, and the relationships between structures and policies of the autonomous region and central government, were to be discussed later.

Despite the agreement, lasting peace did not come to pass, and Qaddafi continued shipping arms to the MNLF.<sup>100</sup> Marcos feigned support of the Tripoli Agreement, and proclaimed an autonomous Muslim region in March 1977. In April, a referendum was held in the southern provinces to determine which desired to become part of the autonomous region. As expected, only four provinces voted for autonomy (the only four provinces with a Muslim majority). In late 1977, the agreement collapsed. Misuari claimed that the Marcos administration had not adhered to the tenets of the agreement, and other Muslim groups claimed government insincerity and deception.<sup>101</sup> Fighting resumed, and the MNLF began to suffer additional splintering as some Muslims began to feel Misuari was being manipulated away from the core beliefs of Islam, and more toward Marxist-Maoist orientations.<sup>102</sup> Misuari denounced a chief rival, Hashim Salamat, and

---

<sup>99</sup> Buss, 110.

<sup>100</sup> Raymond Bonner, *Waltzing With a Dictator* (New York: Times Books, 1987) 161.

<sup>101</sup> Leifer, 160.

<sup>102</sup> Eric Gutierrez and Abdulwahab Guialal, "The Unfinished Jihad." *The Manila Times*. 03 September 1997. Online. Available: HTTP: <http://www.portalinc.com/manilatimes/news3.html>, 03 September 1997.

consolidated his leadership hold. Salamat later formed the breakaway Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 1984.

The government never fully implemented the Tripoli Agreement, and in classic Marcos political manipulation, he checked the renewed uprisings by withdrawing troops from the most disputatious areas and handed over control to armed factions loyal to local Muslim warlords. The Marcos government sporadically negotiated with the Muslim representatives, but also tried to bribe local leaders with money and key political positions in the south. Many ultra-conservative Muslim elites supported Marcos and remained loyal to him even into the Aquino administration. Moro-government negotiations did not take place again until 1986 when the people power movement toppled Marcos and elected Corazon Aquino president.

## **B. THE AQUINO ERA**

In February 1986, following a snap election and massive vote manipulation, thousands of Filipinos flooded the streets of Manila to protest the continued repression and corruption of the Marcos regime. The protests became known as "people power." U.S. President Ronald Reagan supported Marcos throughout, and as Filipinos became more assertive and nationalistic, the U.S. military bases began to overshadow other aspects of the US-Philippine relationship. Anti-Marcos forces framed the bases issue as one threatening Philippine sovereignty, and to many represented a symbol of U.S. colonialism; U.S.-Philippine relations became intermeshed with calls for the resignation of Marcos.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> Steinberg, 175.

Over a period of four days in February 1986, the minister of defense Juan Ponce Enrile, the acting chief of staff (Lieutenant General Fidel Ramos), and key advisors of the opposition leader (Cory Aquino) stood firm against Marcos, ultimately ousted him from office. The U.S. military flew Marcos out of the country to Hawaii, where he would die in exile in 1989. The Philippine government installed Aquino as the duly elected president on February 25, 1986. Her first act was to declare a revolutionary government and fire constitutional officers, civil service employees, and elected officials to clear the way for a new constitutional process.<sup>104</sup>

Aquino moved to restore the democratic institutions which had been nullified prior to the declaration of Martial Law in 1972. This led to the promulgation of a new constitution that was ratified on February 2, 1987. The constitution provided for a tripartite democratic system including an executive, legislative and judicial branch of government. Following up on the spirit of national reconciliation, leaders of the MILF contacted the Aquino government that they were ready to discuss peace. The official message to the Aquino administration called for three specific goals:<sup>105</sup>

- the establishment of cease-fire committees in accordance with the OIC;
- the creation of a committee for implementation of the Tripoli Agreement;
- an end to the Marcos governmental structures.

---

<sup>104</sup> The best account of this transition is found in Mark Thompson, *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>105</sup> Eric Gutierrez and Abdulwahab Guialal, "The Moro Islamic Liberation Front Rises." *The Manila Times*. 04 September 1997. Online. Available: HTTP: <http://www.portalinc.com/manilatimes/news6.html>, 04 September 1997.

Despite the overtures of the MILF, Aquino chose to visit Misuari first in an MNLF camp in Sulu in September 1986. Previously the MILF had joined ranks with Misuari's MNLF to negotiate jointly with the government, and viewed Aquino's visit with Misuari as inappropriate. The MILF then announced that they would not honor any agreements between the government and MNLF. Aquino's visit ultimately legitimized Misuari by giving him a tremendous propaganda coup, and projected him as the leader of the Moro peoples.<sup>106</sup> Negotiations between the MNLF and the government began and used the 1976 Tripoli Agreement as a starting point from which to build. The high profile and politically astute MNLF leadership marginalized the MILF and became the sole representatives in peace negotiations. Outside pressure, particularly from the OIC, began to increase on the Aquino administration to form an agreement with the MNLF, and some members of the OIC threatened to advance the MNLF to full membership should autonomy not be granted.<sup>107</sup>

In January 1987 the MNLF and the government reached a cease-fire. The MNLF relinquished its goal of complete independence for Muslim regions and accepted the government's offer for autonomy; but nonetheless remained armed. By this time, Muslim opposition groups had further splintered, and only the MNLF (representing about 20,000 members) agreed to the peace terms. All the while, the government attempted to establish relations with the MILF, but by early 1987, MILF forces launched offensives against government troops in an attempt to gain negotiating leverage. The 1987

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> "Philippines," *Far Eastern Economic Review Asia 1989 Yearbook* (Hong Kong: FEER Publishing, 1989), 209.



constitution ultimately honored the Tripoli Agreement, and provided for autonomous regions in Muslim areas of Mindanao. At the end of 1987 Aquino created the Regional Consultative Commission (RCC) in an attempt to maintain dialog between the government and rebel groups in preparation for the constitutionally mandated autonomy legislation for Mindanao.<sup>108</sup> Despite creation of the RCC, most of the dialog between the government and MNLF continued to be one-to-one affairs.

Violence in 1988 and 1989 was sporadic, probably due to splits along ethnic and personalistic lines of the Muslim separatist movements. In August 1989, the Aquino administration approved Republic Act 6734 which created the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The affected areas of Mindanao and Sulu were given the right to avoid membership in the ARMM if they so voted in a plebiscite. Since most provinces had majority Christian populations, only four of thirteen provinces voted for autonomy in the November 1989 plebiscite (two in Mindanao and two in Sulu). Many Muslims were dissatisfied with the agreement, felt too much had been compromised, and boycotted the vote. With the agreement in hand and apparent willingness of the government to honor the agreements, Misuari's main rival was no longer the government bureaucracy, but rather the breakaway MILF and its leadership. The MILF has remained adamantly opposed to the government-MNLF agreements, and sporadic violence continued amongst rival factions, family clans and AFP troops.

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 207.



The first election of ARMM officials was held in February 1990, and the new "politico-administrative" body of the ARMM was formally inaugurated in November 1990.<sup>109</sup> The former legal representative of the MNLF, Zacaria Candao, was elected to the governorship and was granted limited executive powers. The functions of the departments of public works, labor and employment, local government, social services, etc. were transferred to Candao and his autonomous regional government. The government authorized the ARMM to initiate and encourage direct foreign investments for growth and development, but the lack of Moro unity and commitment to common cause prevented the ARMM from becoming a functioning, legitimate governing body.

Autonomy for the ARMM was assisted by the Philippine Local Government Code of 1991. This code downgraded the importance of national bureaucracy and decentralized the system of administration. Local mayors and governors were granted greater autonomy and responsibility to develop their own socioeconomic base through self-initiative and internally generated revenue schemes. Also in 1991, the Foreign Investment Act was passed. This act opened up previously restricted areas of the economy and allowed 100% foreign equity in 'strategic industries' (such as mining).

Philippine government officials traveled to Arabian Gulf states in mid-year 1991 to seek Arab investment in the development of the southern Philippines. The OIC voiced its support for government-MNLF agreements and encouraged the peace talks to continue.

---

<sup>109</sup> Rivera, 40.

Another breakaway group, the Islamic extremist Abu Sayyaf Group led by Abdurajik Abubakar Janjalani, split from the MNLF in 1991. Their strength is about 300 mostly younger Muslims, many of whom have studied or worked in the Gulf states where they embraced radical Islamic ideology.<sup>110</sup> As with the MILF, Abu Sayyaf has also refused to accept the peace accords between the MNLF and government.

In sum, Aquino's place in Philippine political history is most significant in that the structures and processes of democracy were restored. Although she could not implement many of her campaign promises (such as land reform) and her attempts to allow autonomy in the southern regions never came to fruition, she succeeded in providing the foundation upon which further social and economic reform could be built. Aquino provided a rallying point for the phalanx of people power that would change Philippine identity and lead the nation into the next century as a truly independent nation.

### **C. THE RAMOS ERA**

The new Philippine constitution allowed for only one six-year term of the presidency, and Fidel Ramos emerged as the front runner in the lead-up to the elections of 1992. Filipino citizens had become frustrated about the lack of reforms and the stalemate of party politics. As Ramos made his bid for the presidency, his campaign focused on the need to restructure government, increase political stability and develop national unity. The victor in the presidential race would inherit a weak state, high foreign debt, severe

---

<sup>110</sup> Patterns of Global Terrorism. United States Department of State Publication 10321 "Terrorist Group Profiles." Dudley Knox Library, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. Online. Available: HTTP: <http://web.nps.navy.mil/~library/tgp/asc.htm>, 22 October 1997.

economic problems and fragmented society torn apart by communist rebels, a right wing military movement and Muslim separatism in the southern regions.

### **1. Goals of the New Administration**

Ramos, a former army general and defense minister, won the election and assumed office on June 30, 1992. He quickly gained a reputation as a diplomatic, methodical and energetic president, and focused his government on economic growth and social equity. His hands-on approach to administrative problem solving led to personal intervention in numerous bureaucratic impasses which had historically bogged down the passage of legislation. His first year was spent establishing alliances with members of congress and laying the groundwork for governmental reforms. As a means to achieving peace, Ramos established the National Unification Commission (NUC), and passed Republic Act 7636, which among other things, repealed the 35-year-old anti-subversion law, and effectively legalized the Communist Party of the Philippines. (The NUC would later recommend amnesty to all rebel groups as a means to achieve peace.)

In January, 1993, Ramos rallied public support for his reform package by launching a campaign called "Philippines 2000." Philippines 2000 is a development program that aims to provide a focus for the government's economic and social goals and to enable the nation to catch up to its more prosperous Asian neighbors. It is combination of vision and strategy that calls for unity of the Filipino peoples, and the formation of a strategic alliance among the government, business/private sector, labor, non-governmental organizations and people's organizations in preparation for entry into the

21st century.<sup>111</sup> Ramos challenged Filipinos to take control of their politics, livelihood and culture, to ultimately shed the stigma of being the "sick man of Asia," and to enter the new century as an industrialized country. The inflow of foreign investment became a cornerstone of Philippines 2000, and without peace and security, the success of Ramos' reforms was uncertain.<sup>112</sup> To modernize the nation through industrialization and mechanization, Ramos had to find a solution to the social unrest.

Ramos' methodical approach to reform measures was also reflected in his political counterinsurgency approach. Through political and legal maneuvering, Ramos appeased many dissident groups responsible for much of the postwar social unrest. He made peace with communist rebels by legalizing their party, then through an amnesty program and release of prominent rebels from jail, began peace negotiations with right-wing military rebels. A cease-fire was signed with the rebels in 1992, and their leader, Colonel Gringo Honasan, opted for political life and was elected to the Senate in May 1995.

By 1993, Ramos achieved working majorities in both houses of Congress and fought off Senate opposition to his reform proposals. Ramos recognized that peace in Mindanao would provide a means to strengthen regional ties and spur economic growth, and had promised during his campaign that his first objective as president would be to

---

<sup>111</sup> Handbook for Filipinos Overseas: 3rd Edition. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.mozcom.com/SCF/Handbook/phil2000.html>, 23 July 1997.

<sup>112</sup> "The Bottom Line," *The Ethnic News Watch - Filipino Reporter*. 10 March 1996: Pg.10. Online. Softline Information, Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: news. File: curnews 04 August 1997.



stop the killing.<sup>113</sup> Holding true to his promises, he re-initiated peace talks with the Muslim separatists and sent an emissary to Libya to meet with Misuari and members of the OIC. Sporadic negotiations took place over the next two years, and by January 1994, under intense pressure from Libya (the MNLF's principle bankroller), Misuari's MNLF and the government again signed a cease-fire agreement.

With the cease-fire in hand, Ramos continued negotiations, seeking to find a middle ground for a governing body upon which both sides could agree. This was in accordance with the Tripoli Agreement. By the end of 1995 the two sides had agreed on over 100 key issues for MNLF political integration, but neither side could agree to a structure for a transitional body to govern Mindanao. Misuari's main objection was that the requirement for a plebiscite would favor the Christian population, which outnumbered Muslims two-to-one. To prevent a stalemate, Ramos sent his executive secretary, Ruben Torres, to Dubai in May of 1996 for secret meetings with Misuari and MNLF leaders. Torres had been a university classmate of Misuari and brought with him a deal for greater autonomy rather than a separate state. The compromise was a five-man Commission for Peace and Development of the Southern Philippines to oversee the areas covered by the 1976 Tripoli Agreement. Misuari was promised chairmanship of the commission and then following a plebiscite, full autonomy would be granted to those regions which desired representation by, and inclusion into the ARMM.

---

<sup>113</sup> Fidel V. Ramos speech: "Seizing the Historic Opportunity in Mindanao." Manila Hotel, Manila, Philippines. 11 July 1996. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.philippines.gov.ph/mhp/textversion/mopc.html2>, 20 August 1997.



## 2. The Agreement: Peace at Last?

The three years of formal talks ended on September 2, 1996, with the signing of a peace accord. Misuari had stopped short of his initial demands for a 10-year provisional government leading to a fully independent Muslim state. Following intercession by Libya and Indonesia, he agreed to a two-phase implementation process for the accord. The agreement was not a solo effort between the Philippine government and the MNLF; Indonesian President Suharto and members of the OIC helped mediate talks during the three years of negotiations. Many of Misuari's compatriots felt he had compromised too much; only the MNLF signed the deal, leaving the MILF and Abu Sayyaf to continue the violent struggle against the government. Upon the signing of the agreement, both Suharto and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced aid to their "Muslim brethren in Mindanao."<sup>114</sup> Suharto and Mahathir then set up organizations to assist the affected area and help Mindanao seek financial assistance from the Islamic Development Bank.

Misuari acknowledged the spirit of Muslim brotherhood, but also added there are more pragmatic reasons: "While we acknowledge the sympathy of our Muslim brothers – we belong to one community and have obligations to one another – the greater impulse behind all this arises from the fact that Mindanao is one of the last great untapped frontiers. We are rich in resources, and occupy a strategic part of Southeast Asia."<sup>115</sup> Suryo Sulisto, head of a Mindanao investment task force, has agreed that new peace

---

<sup>114</sup> Cris Prystay, "Mindanao - Reaping the Peace Dividend." *Times Net Asia*. Online. Available HTTP: <http://web3.asia1.com.sg/timesnet/data/ab/docs/ab1261.html>. 25 August 1997.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

agreement and investment potential are behind the business interest. "Up to now, investing in Mindanao was not attractive because of the unstable political situation. But now, the peace agreement makes investment possible."<sup>116</sup>

The agreement was hailed by some as the beginning of a new era of peace and development; others viewed it as a complete sellout by each side that would usher in a new era, not of peace, but of renewed conflict. As both Christians and Muslims were split on support of the agreement, Ramos set out to campaign for the agreement in order to allay fears that one side or the other would have the advantage. He reassured Christians in the south by reiterating that they will be allowed to vote whether they want to be included in a Muslim autonomous region.

### **3. The Autonomous Government of Mindanao**

The first phase of the peace agreement was a three year transitional period to create a Special Zone of Peace and Development (SZOPAD) encompassing fourteen provinces and nine cities that are home to about two million Muslims.<sup>117</sup> A non-elected administrative body called the Southern Philippine Council for Peace and Development (SPCPD) was formed to oversee development of the area. The SPCPD is comprised of a five-member main council and 81-member Consultative Assembly, all under control of the president of the Philippines. The charter of this group charges it to promote, monitor and coordinate peace and development efforts in the southern islands. (As this unit

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> John Grafilo, "Peace Crumbling in Philippines Mindanao." *Kyodo News Service*. Online. Softline Information Inc. LEXIS NEXIS. Library: world. File: allwld. 01 May 1997.

serves through the delegated powers of the president, its establishment was possible without the constitutional requirement of a plebiscite.)

It was agreed that the SPCPD will always have a Muslim chairman and at least one other Muslim member; furthermore, 44 of the 81 seats in the legislative assembly are designated as Muslim seats, and the SPCPD chairman is to preside over the assembly.<sup>118</sup> Senior Indonesian diplomat Wiryono Sastrohandoyo endorsed the idea of the council to the MNLF saying, "The SPCPD will have powers derived from the Office of the President. It is derivative power, but power just the same. What is important is you will save money for development."<sup>119</sup> The five-member council is answerable to the President and is responsible for channeling development funds from Manila and external supporters to the region, but it does not have the power to make laws. It does however, have the power to call on the military and police to carry out peacekeeping operations. (Former MNLF personnel are being integrated into the Philippine National Police and the Armed Forces of the Philippines at 1,500 and 5,500 respectively.)<sup>120</sup>

Phase two of the agreement provides for the establishment of a new regional autonomous government in 1999 following a plebiscite in member provinces to determine the geographical limits of a Muslim administration. The Philippine Congress

---

<sup>118</sup> "EIU Country Report: The Philippines." Online. Softline Information Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: asiapc. File: alleiu. 01 October 1996.

<sup>119</sup> Tim Healy and Antonio Lopez, "The Anatomy of a Deal; How Ramos's Government and Muslim Rebels Made Peace in Mindanao." *Asiaweek Limited Corp.* 13 September 1996. Online. Softline Information Inc. LEXIS NEXIS. Library: asiapc. File: allasi. 17 April 1998.

<sup>120</sup> Christina Deocadiz, "The First Six Months of SPCPD." *Business World.* 29 April 1997. Online. Softline Information Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: world. File: allwld. 01 May 1997.

will be required to amend or repeal the ARMM act of 1989 (Republic Act 6734) prior to the plebiscite. The plebiscite of 1999 will provide no major shift in the ARMM, for if past history is any indication, probably only the original four provinces of the ARMM will vote to come under Muslim control.

The four provinces that formed the ARMM in the 1989 plebiscite elected Misuari as governor of the ARMM in September 1996. Misuari was also designated as chairman of the SPCPD, a move that hopes to bring financial backing and support from the economic powerhouses of ASEAN (the majority of which are Muslim) as well as the rest of Islamic world. With his dual positions, Musuari has taken upon himself the ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of the agreements.

Opposition to the peace agreement continues from Muslims and Christians alike. The Christian majority claims they were not included or consulted in the process and the agreement essentially hands over almost a quarter of the country with a population of 8.6 million to Muslim former rebels. The MILF and Abu Sayyaf remain opposed to the compromise as well, but Ramos is counting on the economic development of Mindanao to win over opposition.



## **IV. THE IMPLICATIONS OF COMPROMISE**

The signing of the 1996 agreement was a result of compromise by both the government and the MNLF. With the granting of autonomy and the election of Misuari as governor of the ARMM and chairman of the SPCPD, Muslim leaders have taken upon themselves the bulk of responsibility for success or failure of autonomy, reform, and economic development. The presidential election of May 1998, and the ARMM plebiscite of 1999 with both factor in the future direction of ARMM stability and development.

### **A. SOCIO-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS**

When the Philippines joined ASEAN in 1967, it entered with a strong economy and thriving industrial work force. After twenty years of political corruption, social unrest, and civil war, the nation had lost its reputation, wealth and status. The signing of the 1996 peace accord represented a dramatic shift in the balance of power between state and social forces. Compromises by both the government and MNLF contributed to the balance of power and led to the signing of the agreement.

By signing the agreement, the government compromised by accepting some provisions of the Tripoli Agreement; i.e., acceptance of the principle of an autonomous government in the south covering 14 provinces (provided they vote for inclusion in the area of autonomy). The MNLF accepted democratic pluralism under which residents of these areas are entitled to decide for themselves whether to be part of the autonomous



region. Indisputably, at the anterior of peace lies economics, for the linkage between economics and politics is strong and intimate. Through peace, all parties hope to achieve economic prosperity. The government has made positive moves by encouraging investment into affected areas through both tax concessions and subsidies, but uneven development has the potential to cause political or social changes and thus stagnate reforms. Misuari has urged Muslims to honor the peace agreement, and support national programs, which develop the economy, democratize the system, and institute realistic political reforms. In order for Misuari to maintain his legitimacy, positive, visible effects must be seen in Muslim areas, and he must meet the expectations of the majority of Moro peoples. Also, Misuari has to turn his fellow revolutionary cadres into capable administrators for government — no easy task. His switch to politico from revolutionary leader has the potential for compromising his leadership and stature, and already some believe that he has fallen into the "dirty fray of politics."<sup>121</sup> His weakened status was evidenced in July 1997 when he was sent as an emissary of Ramos to initiate peace talks with the MILF. Some MILF leadership refused to give way, feeling that dealing with Misuari was inconsistent with their avowed position of rejection of the ARMM and SPCPD.<sup>122</sup>

The ARMM will face a plebiscite in 1999, and national presidential elections will be held on May 11, 1998. According to the constitution, Ramos will not be allowed to

---

<sup>121</sup> John M. Unson, "Misuari: Reluctant Politician." *The Manila Times*. 05 September 1997. Online. Available: HTTP: <http://www.portalinc.com/manilatimes/news2.html>, 05 September 1997.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

run for a second term. In late 1997, Protestants were joined by Misuari and ARMM officials in supporting an extension of the term of Ramos; Misuari stated, "We want the term of President Ramos extended because we can see that under his administration we can realize the attainment of the Mindanao peace agenda."<sup>123</sup> The Protestants and MNLF lost out on this issue after Catholic Bishops joined with Aquino in denouncing any move to rewrite the constitution. Ramos subsequently stated he would not seek an amendment to the constitution, nor would he seek a second term.

Following his announced support of Ramos for a second term, Misuari called for an amended constitution to allow regionalized representation in the Senate; the election of a vice president each for Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao; and ample representation of Mindanao in the judiciary and the Cabinet. The MILF has called Misuari's campaign for an amended constitution a "manifestation that he is now a full-blooded Filipino politician."<sup>124</sup>

In February 1998, eighty-three candidates filed with the Philippine Commission on Elections for permission to be placed on the presidential ballot, but only eleven were declared qualified to run in the May elections. The majority of presidential candidates have expressed their support for the "Mindanao Agenda" set in place by Ramos. Candidates recognize Misuari's desire for more representation, including the regional election of senators and the appointment of more Muslims to key offices. The candidates, attempting to attract votes from the southern regions, have promised appointment of

---

<sup>123</sup> John Unson, "Misuari Leads DBM-Funded Caravan for Charter Change." *The Manila Times*. 21 August 1997. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.portalinc.com/manilatimes/news2.html>, 21 August 1997.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

Mindanaoans to the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, the Cabinet, heads of government departments, corporations, and the Philippine National Police and flag officers in the Armed Forces of the Philippines.<sup>125</sup> The Mindanao Agenda also calls for the control of mineral wealth, lands, marine and aquatic resources, and the use of lake-waters for power generation in Mindanao by the people in the region.

The ability of Ramos' successor to continue dialog and promote investment and business in the southern regions will probably be the telling tale of whether peace continues. Simply put, if the people of Mindanao see growth occurring, have an increased standard of living, and no longer feel neglected, then there is a significantly less chance of uprisings and violence. The peace agreement does not please everyone, and localized fighting will certainly continue, but an integrated military and police force combined with a representative voice through national and regional bodies such as the ARMM should be able to appease both Christian and Muslim inhabitants.

Some have suggested Ramos could play the role of senior government leader at the end of his term, much like Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew. As the final author and editor of peace negotiations and economic reforms, "Senior Minister Ramos" could provide significant leadership for leading the nation into the next century. Philippine House Speaker Jose de Venecia stated that Ramos as senior statesman would assure foreign

---

<sup>125</sup> Archie Monterola, "Presidential Bets OK 'Mindanao Agenda.'" *The Manila Times*. 24 February 1998. Online. Available: [HTTP: http://www.mb.com.ph/1998/FEB98/24fm01g.htm](http://www.mb.com.ph/1998/FEB98/24fm01g.htm), 24 February 1998.

investors of the continuity of his programs.<sup>126</sup> De Venecia himself is a viable candidate for the presidency as he has shepherded the Ramos reforms through congress and helped build the ruling coalition; his support earned him the endorsement of Ramos for the presidency. However, Misuari and the major Mindanao political organizations have endorsed the former Philippine defense chief, Renato S. de Villa, for president.

During his last few months in office Ramos has continued to pursue peace and reconciliation with those dissatisfied with the peace agreement. The AFP and MILF agreed to a general cessation of hostilities July 1997, and signed by the MILF and government representative Ambassador Fortunato Abat. Peace talks between the government and the MILF began in January 1997, but repeatedly have been spoiled by fighting between the military and rebel forces. In North Cotabato, the fighting has been particularly intense, and has resulted in destroyed houses, burned crops and pockmarked roads. Despite these setbacks, peace talks have shown some promise recently. House Speaker de Venecia met with MILF Chairman Hashim Salamat in March 1998, and said that Salamat, who has not met a national official in 20 years, agreed to expedite the peace negotiations, and assured him that the MILF was serious about negotiating with the Ramos administration.<sup>127</sup> Also, General Abat, the head of the government panel on peace negotiations with the MILF, replaced General de Villa as secretary of defense; the MILF

---

<sup>126</sup> "Ramos Seen as 'Senior Leader': De Venecia Draws up Scenario." *The Ethnic News Watch - Filipino Reporter*. 12 October 1995: Pg.4. Online. Softline Information, Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: news. File: curnews. 04 August 1997.

<sup>127</sup> "JdV, MILF leader meet" *The Manila Bulletin*. 12 March 1998. Online. Available: HTTP: <http://www.mb.com.ph/1998/MAR98/12mm01a.htm>, 12 March 1998.



welcomed the appointment, and called it a "boosting shot" to the peace talks.<sup>128</sup> Abat is well known in Muslim circles, as he was assigned as chief of the defunct Central Mindanao Command during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Ghadzali Jaafar, the MILF's chief peace negotiator said that naming Abat will ensure "synchronized treatment of the peace process by the defense department and the government peace panel."<sup>129</sup> Nonetheless, many members of the MILF continue to call for an independent Muslim state, and claim the peace accord between the government and MNLF was a sham. They argue that poverty has not been alleviated, and have tried to re-ignite the conflict.<sup>130</sup> The MILF is walking a delicate line; should it not make headway in negotiations with the government and choose to launch another offensive it runs the risk of isolation by the international investors in Mindanao, as well mainstream Islamic countries. If the MILF expands its political following through successful appeals to the disillusioned populace and disgruntled members of the MNLF, it could become perceived as victims of the Christian government, and the OIC could feasibly support the organization.

The AFP appear to have learned new tactics during the battles with Muslim forces, particularly since the election of Ramos and his willingness to combine both military and political strategies to bring about peace. AFP leaders speak of dual approaches, using strong military tactics on one hand, and persuasive, diplomatic and

---

<sup>128</sup> John M. Unson, "MILF Backs Appointment of Abat in Defense Post." *The Manila Times*. 18 August 1997. Online. Available: HTTP: <http://www.portalinc.com/manilatimes/news9.html>, 25 August 1997.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Adam Easton, "Muslim Unrest Threatens A Fragile Philippine Peace." *The Christian Science Monitor*. 04 September 1997. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.csmonitor.com/durable/1997/09/04/intl/intl.4.htm>, 05 September 1997.



soci-economic approaches on the other.<sup>131</sup> General Abat has promised infrastructure and development projects to areas under MILF control, and Army engineers have begun paving roads and rebuilding schools, all in an attempt to show Manila's sincerity.<sup>132</sup> Both the MILF and AFP claim defensive operations, but skirmishes will probably continue to erupt despite the cease-fire. Since the Mindanao peace agreements were signed, an average of two firefights per month have taken place between AFP and MILF troops.

MILF ideologies will continue to be at odds with both their fellow Muslims and the government, and will persist as the wild card in the peace process. The government has maintained dialog with the group, but it cannot give the MILF anything beyond that which it has given to the MNLF. It appears the both the government and MILF have simply opted for dialog over all-out warfare for the time being. The respite from fighting provides an opportunity to recover from combat fatigue, but also provides a chance to rearm should the cease-fire not hold. While the government holds out the olive branch to the MILF, it considers Abu Sayyaf a criminal organization with little or no ideology, and has refused to negotiate with its leaders (the group has yet to call for talks with the government). Ramos has stated "The Abu Sayyaf cannot be compared to the MNLF nor the MILF," since its members are considered "terrorists and criminals terrorizing innocent

---

<sup>131</sup> Eric Gutierrez and Abdulwahab Guialal, "MILF Confronts a More Calculating Military." *The Manila Times*. 05 September 1997. Online. Available: HTTP: <http://www.portalinc.com/manilatimes/news3.html>, 05 September 1997.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

and helpless civilians...."<sup>133</sup> The leader of Abu Sayyaf, Ustadz Abubakar Abdurajak Janjalani, is considered the most wanted criminal in the country and is wanted dead or alive.

With the lull in fighting and an ongoing dialog between the government and MILF, it appears social improvements in the southern regions will most likely continue. Mindanao has much to offer Manila through its linkages to regional powers and untapped resources. Manila has attempted to show concern for the welfare of the Moros through investment and infrastructure. Recent improvements in education and health services have resulted in three provinces of southern Mindanao (Zamboanga del Norte, North Cotabato, and Lanao del Norte) having been reclassified from "poverty status" (low Human Development Index)<sup>134</sup> by a recent Human Development Report. This reclassification has been touted by some as proof that increased expenditures have had an effect in some regions. Others argue the development has been concentrated outside Muslim areas. Nonetheless, overall growth in the region's gross domestic product (GDP) has averaged four percent since 1993, and is expected to continue in a positive direction.<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>133</sup> Vic M. Alvarez, "FVR Lukewarm on Abu Sayyaf Talks." 19 February 1998. Online. Available: [HTTP: http:// www.portalinc.com/manilatimes/news9.html](http://www.portalinc.com/manilatimes/news9.html), 19 February 1998.

<sup>134</sup> Human Development Index are parameters used by the United Nations to measure life expectancy, literacy, and income levels in particular localities. Index can be found online. Available: [HTTP: http://www.undp.org/undp/hdro](http://www.undp.org/undp/hdro)

<sup>135</sup> Easton.

## **B. ECONOMIC LINKAGES**

### **1. Global Developments**

The growth in GDP has also been felt at the national level. The corruption of Marcos and the numerous coup attempts during the Aquino administration resulted in significantly less free-flowing foreign capital when compared to its Asian neighbors. The closure of U.S. military bases in 1992 resulted in a rapid decline of U.S. foreign assistance, and increased pressure to make the economy more efficient and competitive. Ramos inherited a sick economy compounded by unreliable power supplies, natural disasters, and kidnap-for-ransom incidents. Having been shunned by many foreign investors, the Aquino cabinet initiated a number of economic and administrative reforms upon which Ramos began to build. These reforms included a privatization program, tariff reforms, liberalization of foreign investment rules and the devolution of financial authority to local governments.<sup>136</sup> Ramos pursued an activist economic policy, with a clear intent to transform the political economy of the nation so that the Philippines would take an active and competitive role in global and regional economics. In cooperation with the International Monetary Fund, Ramos moved quickly to consolidate gains made during the previous administration and to accelerate the reform process. Ramos initiated legislative reform packages which liberalized the economy, and laid the foundation for sustainable growth.

---

<sup>136</sup> Julius Caesar Parrenas, "The Philippines: Reaping the Fruits of Reform and Stability," *Southeast Asian Affairs 1997* (Singapore: ISEAS, 1997), 233.

Although the nation missed out on the "Asian miracle" boom of the 1980's, it has turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The speculative frenzy that occurred in neighboring nations and resulted in failed banks and real estate busts has not occurred with the same intensity in the Philippines. Philippine banks have few problems finding hard currency as millions of Filipinos working abroad continue to send back money to their relatives, which has provided a stable and steady source of foreign exchange. The Philippine peso has lost value, but not nearly as much as the rupiah, ringgit or baht. No Philippine banks have gone bust, and the economy is expected to grow by more than two percent in 1998. With a manageable trade deficit, successive budget surpluses, and tax reforms on the way, it appears that the Philippines will continue to realize modest growth, despite the surrounding storm.

Ramos recognized the importance of globalism, and regional economic cooperation, but first set out remedy internal issues such as the lack of electric power, the power of the banking monopolies and the dominance of the oligarchial system (those persons with political influence whom Ramos felt extracted "wealth without effort from the economy").<sup>137</sup> Ramos privatized the government electric company and accelerated power plant construction, which increased power output and ended the years of brownouts. He then established an independent central bank, and with the backing of the International Monetary Fund, cut import tariffs and other trade barriers. A value-added tax on consumption was implemented and the banking industry was opened to foreign

---

<sup>137</sup> Paul D. Hutchcroft, "The Philippines at the Crossroads: Sustaining Economic and Political Reform." Online. Available HTTP: [http://askasia.org/who\\_we\\_are/asia\\_society/contemporary\\_affairs/phili.htm](http://askasia.org/who_we_are/asia_society/contemporary_affairs/phili.htm), 30 November 1996.



ownership. Monopolies in the telecommunication and airline industries were then broken up, and build-operate-transfer concepts were implemented. Under these concepts, private developers built projects such as roads and bridges with their own funds and were allowed to make a profit on tolls for a set number of years. The projects are to then be turned over to the government.

As monopolies were broken up, so too was the influence of many of the oligarchies, whose dominance in politics and business made them unwilling to risk their privileged position by accepting state action to get at the roots of poverty. By 1994, the reforms that the IMF had implemented brought positive results, and the government had eased regulations on foreign exchange and investment. Foreign money began to flow into the stock market, and from the stock market into capital investments. Ramos began to lead diplomatic and trade missions throughout Europe and the Middle East; traveling to over 30 countries in his first five years as president. According to the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry, these trips generated \$22.4 billion in investments from joint ventures.<sup>138</sup> As Ramos set out on a campaign for international and regional economic cooperation, Muslim Mindanao would be a global trump card that Ramos would play from the Middle East to his immediate neighbors in Malaysia and Indonesia. The historically neglected Filipino Muslims would now become a key factor in the development and globalization of the nation.

---

<sup>138</sup> "RP Posts \$22-B Foreign Investments." *Manila Bulletin*. Online. Available: HTTP: <http://www.mb.com.ph/1998/MAR98/02mm01k.htm>, 02 March 1998.

In a March 1997 Misuari traveled with Ramos to the Middle East. Philippine government representatives signed agreements with numerous countries for investment and development of the southern regions. During the trip, Qatar signed an economic, commercial and technical cooperation agreement and labor treaty; Bahrain and the Philippines signed a memorandum of understanding to expand bilateral cooperation in investment, manpower contracts and technology;<sup>139</sup> Pakistan signed an agreement for joint military exercises, trade, and cooperation in peaceful nuclear technology. Additionally, two Saudi companies agreed to invest in agricultural projects in Mindanao. It appears that the Ramos administration has made effective use of the government-MNLF peace agreement in that links with Middle Eastern Islamic nations have become a component of the Ramos reform agenda.

## **2. Mindanao Development**

It now seems Mindanao is set to reap the benefits of reform and compromise. The cost of the 26-year insurgency is impossible to calculate; in terms of human life, sources vary on the total lives lost, but the most common figure is around 120,000. About half of the lives lost were rebels, a third were government troops, and the rest were civilians.<sup>140</sup> The government poured 40 percent of the annual military budget into the civil war, and on average deployed half of its forces to the southern regions.<sup>141</sup> The cost to Mindanao in

---

<sup>139</sup> "Money Clips." *GCC Ltd.* 12 March 1997. Online. Softline Information, Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: world. File: allwld. 01 May 1997.

<sup>140</sup> Tim Healy and Antonio Lopez. "A Warrior Comes In From The Cold." *Asiaweek*. 12 December 1996. Online. Softline Information, Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: asiapc. File: alleiu. 05 June 1997.

<sup>141</sup> "EIU Country Report: The Philippines." 21 October 1996. Online. Softline Information, Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: asiapc. File: alleiu. 05 June 1997.

lost opportunities, destroyed infrastructure, population displacements, and continued poverty is enormous. In terms of economic development, the region has lagged behind the rest of the country by 20 years.<sup>142</sup> Ramos recognized the opportunity that peace in Mindanao represented for the nation; the government would be able to apply resources to investment, infrastructure, and business which had previously diverted to the war effort. Ramos and Misuari both are counting on their agreements to bring new business and domestic and international investment to the region. Ramos has stated, "Within two to five years, we want SZOPAD to become an area of vigorous growth where our people – Muslims, Christians, and indigenous communities together – shall live in harmony in a culture of peace, unity and prosperity."<sup>143</sup>

Ramos described his vision for Mindanao to Time Magazine as follows:<sup>144</sup>

- To remove from the southern Philippines the roots of dissidence, injustice and inequity.
- To make Mindanao a progressive social, economic and political component of the Philippines. "Mindanao has certain advantages in terms of its proximity to the more progressive countries of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei."
- To raise all of the people of Mindanao – Christians, Muslims and indigenous peoples – to a level of development already achieved by many Filipinos in the Visayas and Luzon, so that together, all Filipinos can be truly competitive in the 21st century.

The government and MNLF have reaffirmed promises to work together in pursuit of peace and development in the whole of Mindanao; the mutual goal is to convert the

---

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Antonio Lopez, "Just and Lasting Peace." *Asiaweek*. 13 September 1996. Online. Available HTTP: [http://www.pathfinder.com/@Q257EQQA6nCvT\\*HP/asiaweek/96/0913/nat2.html](http://www.pathfinder.com/@Q257EQQA6nCvT*HP/asiaweek/96/0913/nat2.html), 05 September 1997.

region into a centerpiece of development and a major link to global markets.<sup>145</sup> Misuari has called upon Mindanaoans to work harder to make Mindanao "a new Hong Kong." Government-funded overhead capital such as public facilities, transport, and power supplies have greatly improved the region's development potential. Government money has also begun to flow into infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges, and the private sector has been encouraged to invest in telecommunication and power projects. From November 1996 to April 1997, the government released \$1.6 billion to finance projects in Mindanao such as airports, irrigation, schools, roads and houses.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also has gotten involved in development projects, and in August 1997 signed an agreement with Misuari to assist in the rebels' transformation from arms bearers to food producers and entrepreneurs.<sup>146</sup> The agreement committed funding, technical assistance, and training to encourage groups of former MNLF combatants to turn to farming instead of violence and illegal activities as a means of livelihood. USAID pledged to initiate an Emergency Livelihood Program to provide assistance for up to 2,000 ex-combatants in 10 different SZOPAD area sites. The government has also launched a literacy program for about 200 former MNLF combatants and their family members.

---

<sup>145</sup> Isabel C. De Leon, "Gov't. MNLF Vow: Will Continue Working Together." *Manila Bulletin*. 03 September 1997. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.mb.com.ph/1997/SEP97/03sm01a.htm>, 05 September 1997.

<sup>146</sup> US Agency for International Development, Manila, Philippines press release, "Livelihood Program Pledged for Former Moro Rebels." 04 September 1997. Online. Available HTTP: [http://www.usaid-ph.gov/press/moro\\_rebels.html](http://www.usaid-ph.gov/press/moro_rebels.html), 04 September 1997.



In February 1998, Ramos inaugurated three major electrical power projects in Mindanao to further increase business and trade activities. The Zamboanga City plant in western Mindanao will give the entire Zamboanga peninsula its own generating capacity. According to Ramos, "The diesel plant will provide infrastructure support to the region's economic growth. Through the assurance of adequate and reliable power supply, the Zamboanga peninsula will become more attractive to prospective investors, thereby increasing economic activities in the region."<sup>147</sup> With the operation of the diesel power plant, Mindanao now has a total power generating capacity of 1,568 megawatts – more than enough to supply the region's current needs of 920 megawatts. Projects such as these power plants ultimately will benefit the business community by providing basic necessities which had often been lacking. Since his election as Governor of the ARMM, Misuari has aggressively touted Mindanao's potential for development and courted regional and international investment. Malaysian deputy Prime Minister Ibrahim has encouraged Malaysian firms to invest in the southern Philippines and suggested that OIC member countries could help as well.<sup>148</sup> Malaysians have now become the most active new investors in Mindanao. On May 6, 1997, the Malaysian National News Agency reported that proposals to the SPCPD have included joint ventures for cargo and passenger vessel services, expansion of National Steel Corporation, shipbuilding, water supply and sewerage system, and low cost housing.

---

<sup>147</sup> *The Manila Bulletin*. 18 February 1998. Online. Available HTTP: <http://www.mb.com.ph/1998/FEB98/18fm01h.htm>, 18 February 1998.

<sup>148</sup> "EIU Country Report: The Philippines." 01 October 1996. Online. Softline Information, Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: asiapc. File: alleiu. 20 June 1997.

The ARMM has begun to promote even bigger-scale investments including oil refineries, petrochemical, shipmaking, textiles, telecommunications and agro-industrial estates. The ARMM has offered special incentives to potential investors including income tax holidays, imported capital equipment, tax credit on domestic capital equipment, exemption from contractor's tax, employment of foreign nationals, and exemption from wharfage dues, export taxes, and duty and import fees. The government has guaranteed investors their basic rights such as repatriation of investment, remittance of earnings, freedom from expropriation of property represented by the investment, or requisition of investment.

The *Financial Times Asia* reported on April 29, 1997, that Mindanao now accounts for 17.3% of new investments as compared to other regions of the Philippines. Investments from Japan, the United States, Malaysia, Brunei and Middle East countries continue to pour in, while investment and infrastructure reforms have begun to pay off. The island's gross regional domestic product (GRDP), which had been continually declining since 1978, began to register growth in 1993 and has since averaged more than four percent per annum. Both investments and bank deposits in Mindanao have risen dramatically, and construction permits have risen by 33 percent annually since 1992.

Cities that were largely unaffected by the fighting have registered twice the national rate of economic growth due to the influx of private firms. Mindanao and the central islands now account for 35% of the nation's GDP and many of the best performing stocks at the Philippine Stock Exchange have operations affiliated with Mindanao.

Along with regional development has come concern of a short-term gain attitude and "plunder economy" that could lead to environmental crisis. The nation had virtually no environmental controls until the presidential term of Ramos. In the late 1980's the World Wildlife Fund began major activities in the Philippines and by 1988 facilitated the completion of a \$2 million debt-for-nature swap program whereby portions of the nation's foreign debt were cancelled in exchange for Philippine government sponsorship of conservation projects.<sup>149</sup> In 1992, the Integrated Protected Areas System was enacted into law and protects all national parks and other nature reserves in the nation. In 1994, following complaints from environmentalists that illegal mining was disturbing the ecological balance particularly in southern Mindanao Ramos ordered the agriculture department to regulate all mineral extraction activities in the nation, "especially those that damage the environment."<sup>150</sup> The National Catholic Reporter magazine reported on June 30, 1995 that "ecological action by tribal and bioregional groups organized around Mindanao's base Christian communities has influenced the religious, social and political consciousness of the region."<sup>151</sup> The groups have fought logging operations, begun reforestation projects, established sea sanctuaries, promoted organic farming, created community-based health programs, and campaigned against toxic waste dumps.<sup>152</sup>

---

<sup>149</sup> "Special Feature: 1998: Year of the Oceans." *Financial Times Asia*. 19 January 1998. Online. Softline Information Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: news. File: allnws. 17 April 1998.

<sup>150</sup> The Mining Journal. "Philippine Mining Regulation." 18 November 1994. Online. Softline Information Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: news. File: allnws. 17 April 1998.

<sup>151</sup> Sharon Abercrombie. *National Catholic Reporter* Vol. 31. Issue 33 (1995). 30 June 1995: 12. Online. Softline Information Inc. LEXIS-NEXIS. Library: news. File: allnws. 17 April 1998.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

### 3. Regional Cooperation

Mindanao also offers Manila a means to finally overcome ASEAN's common stereotype that the Philippines was a mere puppet of the United States. Despite full membership in ASEAN, the Philippines never enjoyed full faith and confidence of member states.<sup>153</sup> The unique relationship with the United States separated the nation from other members of ASEAN who perceived the government as irrevocably linked to its U.S. colonial father. The relationship was a mark of disdain with many Southeast Asia neighbors, particularly for Indonesia which considered that the Philippines never proved itself worthy of independence. Many Indonesians felt that the Filipinos had never truly fought for their freedom, but rather had it "handed to them" from the United States.<sup>154</sup>

Marcos' quarrels with Malaysia over Sabah and the 1972 declaration of Martial law did nothing to endear the nation to neighboring states with majority Islamic populations. As the nation muddled along with the corrupt administration of Marcos, neighboring countries began to realize economic growth through policies of liberalization and privatization. These practices were accomplished through a commitment to economic openness and active membership in regional cooperative forums such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Free Trade Area of ASEAN (AFTA).<sup>155</sup> The growing economic interdependence among Southeast Asian nations

---

<sup>153</sup> Buss, 169.

<sup>154</sup> Buss, 170.

<sup>155</sup> Hutchcroft.



made it imperative that if the Philippines wanted to rise in political and economic status within the region, commitment to active participation in regional organizations and forums had to take place.

The nation's movement toward its Asia neighbors began with the People Power movement of 1986. People power represented a rebirth of independence for Filipinos, and began to change previously-held perceptions that the nation was inseparably linked to the United States. Through people power, the nation not only regained its sovereignty, independence and sense of national self, but also sent a clear signal to its neighbors that Filipinos had diverted their gaze away from "big brother" and had begun to chart their own course. The rejection of the renewal of U.S. military bases was the final push to cast-off the colonized mentality and gain final independence and sovereignty.

It appears Ramos also recognized that as a byproduct of that sovereignty, the nation no longer had excuses for its woes. Having set his agenda for national reconciliation in motion, Ramos thus turned the nation's eyes to their Asian neighbors. The peace agreement has allowed the nation to use Muslim linkages in the south, as a means to enter into regional trade linkages that would elevate the nation both economically and politically. One such maneuver was the proposal to form a regional growth area connecting East Asian nations for interregional trade and commerce. In October of 1992, Ramos proposed to the leaders of Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia that they join the Philippines in the formation of a growth area in the East ASEAN region. The proposal was heartily received, and by 1994, the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines - East Asian Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) was formed. The agreement

established a free trade zone in the territories of Mindanao and Palawan, the state of Brunei, the Indonesian provinces of North Sulawesi, East and West Kalimantan, and the Malaysian states of Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan.



Map 3: BIMP-EAGA

Regional leaders have thus recognized the value of growth areas and have encouraged the formation and investment via the formation of additional "growth triangles." Since formation of BIMP-EAGA, participating nations have held ministerial and working group meetings every six months, and membership has expanded to a total of 13 provinces including regions of Maluku and Irian Jaya, Indonesia (Indonesia is now the largest participating country).

The goal of BIMP-EAGA is intended not only to attract investment to Asia's "last frontiers," but to increase trade, regional and global investment and tourism.

Governments in the region hope to build on the common history, religion and trade ties in the EAGA by formation of an integrated economy with no borders to restrict movement and trade.

Shortly after its formation, the group formed an East ASEAN Business Council (EABC) to link chambers of commerce in the region which demonstrated government realization that the growth area is market-driven and private-sector-led.<sup>156</sup> BIMP-EAGA has become a prominent player in the region, and since its inception has garnered more publicity in the public and private sectors than what ASEAN had commanded in its first two decades.<sup>157</sup> EAGA governments have initiated numerous agreements for transportation linkages, tourism development, shipping services, etc. Philippine EAGA promoters view Mindanao island as a key jumping off point for exporters to ASEAN by way of the EAGA. The EAGA concept, including improved transportation and

---

<sup>156</sup> Takenhiko, 18.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 19.

communication links, when combined with the negotiated peace settlement, has provided the impetus for economic growth of the southern region, which in turn has fueled national growth. Six direct shipping routes have been established between Mindanao and other EAGA ports, and thirteen intra-EAGA air links have been established. After barely only four years, \$2.3 billion in joint venture agreements have been signed, and additional agreements continue to emerge.<sup>158</sup> Direct subregional cooperation has affected positively the nation. Even in the wake of the 1997-98 Asian economic crisis, Ramos' policies have allowed the nation to weather the storm much better than its neighbors. The BBC reported that the President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, has pledged a second billion dollar loan to the Philippines this year to assist in improving the country's financial system and developing its infrastructure, employment and private sector development.<sup>159</sup> Wolfensohn also called the Philippine economy "fundamentally sound," and vastly different than that of Korea, Thailand or Indonesia. Just as these nations are coming under IMF supervision and seeking bail-out money from the IMF, the Philippines has exited from over 35 years of IMF supervision.

As decentralization and autonomy have provided a means to strengthen and intensify regional ties, internal violence in Mindanao has the potential to reduce big-ticket investments and business. Criminal activity is on the rise in the South, and the breakdown in law and order could pose even more of a threat to economic growth than a

---

<sup>158</sup> "The Brunei Darussalam Indonesia Malaysia the Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA)." Online. Available: HTTP: <http://www.brunet.bn/org/bimpeabc/welcome.htm>, 14 April 1998.

<sup>159</sup> "\$1 Billion Loan for Philippines." *BBC*. 06 February 1998. Online. Available: HTTP: [http://news.bbc.co.uk:80/hi/english/business/newsid\\_54000/54054.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk:80/hi/english/business/newsid_54000/54054.stm), 06 February 1998.



renewed offensive by the MILF. Dozens of people were abducted for ransom (most in the central Mindanao region) in 1997. The AFP blames the MILF for the abductions, but MILF leaders have reiterated their strict policy against such "nefarious activity."

Whether true or not, predatory criminal gangs with uncertain loyalties have found a lucrative business in abduction and ransom. The incorporation of separatist soldiers into the AFP and police forces could provide solutions to criminal activity, but by the same token, up to 2,000 former members of the MNLF have joined the MILF out of dissatisfaction with the peace process. The MILF has the capacity to mount a serious and sustained offensive against military and civilian targets in central Mindanao, but the cease-fire seems to have held thus far. Abu Sayyaf has been implicated in a number of the kidnappings of local people in southern Mindanao, and retains some ability to disrupt peace and development. Most likely Abu Sayyaf will remain in the background unless violent anti-Muslim groups become active once again.

The upcoming May 1998 elections have the potential to reignite unrest if the successor to Ramos does not continue dialog and promote investment and business in the southern regions. For peace to continue, the best approach for the new president would be to continue the reform process. This includes emphasis on infrastructure development in southern regions, acceleration of trade within BIMP-EAGA, and continuous support for the Mindanao agenda beyond the 1998 presidential elections. Growth equals stability and guarantees support for reforms. Provided those reforms are felt by the populace, the possibility of an uprising is significantly decreased. The agreement does not please everyone, and localized fighting will continue, but an integrated military and police force

with a stable governing body should be able to appease both Christian and Muslim inhabitants.

For now, it appears the business community sees a relatively safe economic and social environment in Mindanao and has committed itself to investment in the region. The prospects for development seem almost limitless, but in order to sustain economic growth of the past three years, the government needs the peace agreement to hold, and for the opposition groups to give peace a chance. For the Moro peoples, the agreement will provide the right to self-govern within the ARMM and without secession. For the Christian Filipinos, the agreement provides the necessary stability whereby the population as a whole can reap the benefits of economic growth.

## V. FUTURE/CONCLUSIONS

The roots of Moro resistance were not merely a matter of religion and/or colonization, but rather several factors interwoven throughout history. In his book *Revolt in Mindanao*, T.J.S. George states that one cannot selectively attribute religion, social and/or economic deprivation, political manipulation, or government ineptitude as solely the root of violence. George states that these theories were "relevant only insofar as they were all pieces of an enormously complex jigsaw."<sup>160</sup>

As demonstrated in this thesis, the historical record confirms that Moro identity was politicized, first by Spanish and American colonization, and finally by the independent Philippine government. Spanish colonization established a geographically oriented north-south divide between Muslims and Christians, and the American colonial government further reified that boundary through migrations and land grants to Christians. The historically-constructed enmity between the Moros and governing forces erupted into sustained violence in 1972 when the politicized Moro identity was ignited by the forced centralization policies of President Ferdinand Marcos. It was not until the decentralization and autonomy policies of the Ramos administration that peace between the Moros and government was achieved.

The government and MNLF both made significant concessions in reaching the agreement to preserve the territorial integrity of the Philippines while providing areas for meaningful economic cooperation and self-government.

---

<sup>160</sup> George, 11-12.

President Ramos has called the peace process his greatest achievement while in office,<sup>161</sup> and this peace is crucial to the evolution of the Philippines into a newly industrialized nation. The Moros have symbolic religious ties and concrete economic linkages to neighboring Malaysia and Indonesia, and peace between the Moros and the Philippine government is the means by which the nation can seize upon that link and grow economically.

Ramos has taken the first step to move the nation into the next century, but it is possible that the successor to Ramos may be less committed to the reform process. Philippines 2000 seems to have brought upon the stability and economic growth necessary for entry into the next century as a newly industrialized nation, but the quality of the follow-on administration will play a key role in continued economic reform and recovery. Breakaway groups from the MNLF will remain a threat to peace, but with economic growth and a renewed stature within ASEAN, particularly with Indonesia and Malaysia, the nation may be able to appease opposition forces. For now, both the government and the majority MNLF seem willing to accept and abide by the peace agreement. However, the later part of this decade will bring national elections and an ARMM plebiscite which will be the most likely determinate factors for continued stability and future economic growth.

---

<sup>161</sup> "The Philippines News Map." *Asiaweek*. 08 August 1997. Online. Available: HTTP: [http://www.pathfinder.com/@@3oakJwcAA\\*RC\\*nGJ/Asiaweek/current/issue/newsmap/philippi.html](http://www.pathfinder.com/@@3oakJwcAA*RC*nGJ/Asiaweek/current/issue/newsmap/philippi.html), 14 August 1997.



## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abinales, Patricio. "State Authority and Local Power in Southern Philippines." Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1997.

Buss, Claude A. *Cory Aquino and the People of the Philippines*. Stanford: The Stanford Alumni Association, 1987.

Bentley, G. Carter. "Mohamad Ali Dimaporo: A Modern Maranao Datu." In *An Anarchy of Families: State and Family in the Philippines*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy. Madison, Wisconsin: Center for Southeast Asian Studies University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1993.

Bonner, Raymond. *Waltzing With a Dictator*. New York: Times Books, 1987.

Dolan, Ronald E., ed. *Philippines: A Country Study*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993.

Domingo, Ruben G. "The Muslim Secessionist Movement in the Philippines: Issues and Prospects." M.A. Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1995.

Fowler, Dennis Bryce. "The Moro Problem: An Historical Perspective." Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1985.

George, T.J.S. *Revolt in Mindanao: The Rise of Islam in Philippine Politics*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Glang, Alunan C., *Muslim Secession or Integration?* Manila: R.P. Garcia, 1969.

Gowing, Peter G., and Robert D. McAmis. *The Muslim Filipinos*. Manila: Solidaridad, 1974.

Gurr, Ted Robert. *Minorities at Risk*. Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993.

Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.

Karnow, Stanley. *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*. New York: Random House, 1989.

Magdalena, Frederico V., *Ethnicity, Identity, and Conflict: The Case of the Philippine Moros*. Singapore: ISEAS, 1996.

Majul, Cesar A. and R. Santos Cuyugan, *Trends in Ethnic Group Relations in Asia and Oceania, Minorities in the Philippines: The Muslims*. London, UNESCO, 1979.

McDougald, Charles C. *The Marcos File*. San Francisco: San Francisco Publishers, 1987.

McKenna, Thomas M. "Appreciating Islam in the Muslim Philippines." In *Islam in the Era of Nation-States*, ed. Robert W. Heffner and Patricia Horvatic. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

Mednick, Melvin. "Some Problems of Moro History and Political Organization." In *The Muslim Filipinos*, ed. Peter G. Gowing and Robert D. McAmis. Manila: Solidaridad, 1974.

Miller, Stuart Creighton. *Benevolent Assimilation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982.

Parrenas, Julius Caesar. "The Philippines: Reaping the Fruits of Reform and Stability." *Southeast Asian Affairs 1997*. Singapore: ISEAS, 1997.

Rizal, Jose. *Noli Me Tangere*. Translated by Ma. Soledad Lacson-Locsin. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

Rodil, B.R. *The Lumad and Moro of Mindanao*. London: Minority Rights Group, 1992.

Sajoo, Aryn B. *Pluralism in Old Societies and New States*. Singapore: ISEAS, 1994.

Steinberg, David Joel, ed. *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985.

Steinberg, David Joel. *The Philippines: A Singular and Plural Place*. Colorado: Westview Press, 1994.

Thompson, Mark. *The Anti-Marcos Struggle: Personalistic Rule and Democratic Transition in the Philippines*. Yale University Press, 1996.

## INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center ..... 2  
8725 John J. Kingman Rd., STE 0944  
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia 22060-6218
2. Dudley Knox Library ..... 2  
Naval Postgraduate School  
411 Dyer Rd.  
Monterey, California 93943-5101
3. Chairman ..... 1  
National Security Affairs Department  
Naval Postgraduate School  
411 Dyer Rd.  
Monterey, California 93943-5101
4. Dr. Mary Callahan ..... 1  
Code NS/CM  
National Security Affairs Department  
Naval Postgraduate School  
411 Dyer Rd.  
Monterey, California 93943-5101
5. Commander Joint Intelligence Center Pacific..... 1  
Box 500  
Pearl Harbor, HI 96860-7450
6. Office of Naval Intelligence..... 1  
4251 Suitland Rd.  
Washington, D.C. 20395-5270
7. Central Intelligence Agency..... 1  
Office of Asian Pacific and Latin American Analysis (APLA)  
Washington, D.C. 20505
8. Department of State..... 1  
Bureau of Intelligence and Research  
Washington, D.C. 20520-6510
9. LCDR John D. Harber..... 2  
Naval Postgraduate School  
2 University Circle SGC #2225  
Monterey, California 93943

10. Dr. Patricio Abinales..... 1  
Department of Political Science  
Ohio University  
Bentley Hall  
Athens, OH 45701
11. Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies.....1  
2255 Kuhio Avenue, Suite 1900  
Honolulu, HI 96815
12. Curator..... 1  
Echols Collection  
Olin Library  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY 14853



DUDLEY KNOX LIBRARY  
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
MONTEREY CA 93943-5101

DUDLEY KNOX LIBRARY



3 2768 00346828 1